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Battles takes a break from writing on the walls. (Photo by Grace Villamil)



PUMA by MIHARAYASUHIRO



ED'S RANT MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR



This issue was a happy accident. Like a baby you weren't really looking forward to but then it comes out really beautiful and you love it to death. Wait... That's kind of a disgusting metaphor, right? But also strangely appropriate for an issue planned by sheer instinct, and one that features a number of creators who rely on magic and faith to make art and music happen.

Battles started out as a hotly debated cover choice—it's not often we put a rock band on our marquee, much less one whose music is impossible to classify by genre and who doesn't even have a debut album out yet. Aside from purely loving Battles' brain-twisting fusion of rock, rhythm, and mystery, we chose them because they embody new music—and we knew a story involving a great metal drummer, a math-rock guitarist, and a downtown experimental whiz (and the son of a man *All Music Guide* calls “jazz's last bona fide genius”) had to be interesting.

The Battles interview was not without its own happy accident. On one of the coldest days of NYC's winter, writer Andrew Parks met up with the band at a pub—and started a rather tense interview. Halfway through, the digital tape recorder clattered to the floor and erased itself; the posse regrouped, started over (amidst many jokes), and we ended up with funny quotes about cheerleaders and omelettes.

Chalk it up to the supernatural powers of the universe. At least, that's what Friends With You does. Miami's Sam and Tury have made a big splash with their comically lovable plush toys and fantastical playgrounds. In Vis-Ed, they explain how positive vibes, and special talismans—plus hard work—got them where they are today. Meanwhile, three up-and-coming rap stars from Detroit are getting other-worldly inspiration as well, channeling the spirit of the late J Dilla to create new albums that knock. Some phone issues magically got sorted out at the last minute, enabling Jesse Serwer to get down with Black Milk, Phat Kat, and Guilty Simpson about the new wave of Detroit hip-hop.

In April, we always like to change things up a bit—on some “out with the old, in with the new” tip. To that end, we've given our Prefix section a makeover. Make sure to peep our new Mixtape column, where artists curate a track selection for you every month, and What Is It?, a piece that decodes obscure music styles from around the world.

We've also revamped our website. In case you haven't checked it, you're missing DJ podcasts from Ellen Allien and Dirt Crew, feature archives back to the Dark Ages, psychedelic videos from Deerhunter and Black Dice, our Peepshow photo feature, and new music blogs. It's at www.xlr8r.com. (Duh).

And in case you're wondering exactly how this all gets done with a full-time staff of only 10 people... Well, do you believe in magic?

—Vivian Host, Editor

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Battles photographed with their musical algorithms by Grace Villamil



PUMA by MIHARAYASUHIRO



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STACEY DUGAN

Since winning an honorable mention in her middle school regional science fair, Stacey Dugan has known she was destined for great feats, though for some, it would come as a shocking disappointment when that greatness manifested itself in the field of entertainment journalism. Stacey has found writing to be a profoundly gratifying profession—particularly when she gets the opportunity to discuss the subtle nuances of intimate apparel with some of club-rap's brightest rising stars, as she did for this issue.

www.diwmagazine.com



ANDREW PARKS

This May marks the four-year anniversary of Andrew Parks not having a "real" job. In other words, he has poor health insurance and often doesn't leave the office until it's dark out. And by office, we mean his Brooklyn apartment, where AP snorts coarse coffee grounds while DJing for his chihuahua, editing *DIW*, and writing for *Rolling Stone*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *Billboard*, *Urb*, *Decibel*, *MAGNET*, and other publications that put up with his bullshit.



DEREK MORRIS

Growing up in Las Vegas, Derek Morris started his artistic career secretly coloring on the underside of his mother's coffee table. Furthering his dreams, he moved to San Francisco and attended CCA, majoring in graphic design. Now based in New York, Morris, who illustrated this month's What Is It? feature, works under the moniker Trophy and enjoys taking pictures of his boyfriend, playing Fleetwood Mac too loud, and making cards for his niece and nephew. His work has been featured in *SOMA*, *Catastrophe*, and *XLR8R*.

www.trophygraphics.com



GRACE VILLAMIL

NY-based visual artist Grace Villamil just returned from the Philippines, where she shot on a secluded island enveloped by a turquoise ocean and warm people. She arrived back to blistering cold Brooklyn just in time to shoot Battles and Bad Brains' HR, wearing a parka and a totally rad tan. Villamil has created album artwork for artists including Susie Ibarra's Electric Kulintang and Prefuse 73. Her work has been shown in New York, Los Angeles, Japan, and the Philippines.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Like us? Hate us? Write us! Email letters to letters@xlr8r.com or send mail to XLR8R Magazine, 1388 Haight Street #105, San Francisco CA 94117.



January/February Issue #104



March Issue #105

Psyched Out

Hello XLR8R,

I was so pumped that you guys finally covered the blossoming psychedelic artists coming up from the underground [#104, Higher State of Consciousness]. After reading the Frankie Martin piece, I've become her biggest fan. Thanks again for introducing me to the freshest new artists. Keep banging.

Naisha Scott, via the web

Column Bind

I've been reading your magazine for over two years now and I really like the way your columns have changed (especially the leftfield). How do I get one of your guys to hear some of my band's records? Maybe if you had a column devoted to full-on indie rock I'd have a shot. Ha ha. Keep up the good work.

Zane F., via the web

Inciteful Words

Hey!!! Massive thanks for having "Outside" as a featured download last month. Much respect goes out.

Moff x (a.k.a. Mothboy), via MySpace

Bryant responds: No problem, Moff. Keep checking Incite Online's download section each week for five free MP3s and more at xlr8r.com.

Burnin' Men

Hey XLR8R

It's been a minute since you guys covered reggae and dancehall to such an extent that I thought maybe you weren't even down with it anymore.

But with Sizzla on the cover [issue #105, Fire Starter] and the King Jammy discs [reviewed], you guys are back on top. Nice one.

Jerry, via the web

Ken responds: All that and no mention of the Greensleeves feature?

Murphy's Law

Yo XLR8R,

I just wanted to show some appreciation for the LCD Soundsystem studio interview [#105, In the Studio]. I've always wondered how James Murphy is able to get his tracks to sound so raw...now I'm a little bit closer. What are the odds of getting some more studio tips and info on the website? Just sayin'...

DJ Dirtskinz, via the web

Ken responds: Dirtskinz, by the time you read this, you'll have a slew of web-based studio features to weed through, as all of the mag's sections (including Machines, of course) are going digital. Check out www.xlr8r.com in the coming months for the huge rollout of all our features and reviews.



XLR8R'S "GET SPRUNG" CONTEST

Win a prize pack of clothing and gifts from The Quiet Life, plus tons of CDs.

Spring is upon us, and this month's contest is packed with tons more reasons for you to get sprung. From our friends at L.A.-based design house The Quiet Life comes a prize pack that includes all sorts of wearable art. You've seen The QL's work on album covers from Trans Am to Jimmy Eat World, and these t-shirts (including the particularly apt "People People Why Are We Fighting?" tee) boasts some of Andy Mueller's and Jennifer Pitt's hottest design work. We'll also throw in a clutch of this month's best music, hand-picked from the pages of our features and reviews sections: Joakim's *Monsters & Silly Songs* (IK7); Tracey Thorn's *Out of the Woods* (Virgin/Astralwerks); techno guest reviewers JDH & Dave P's *Go Commando* (Defend Music) mix; a heaping slice of Brah Records' catalog in the form of Pterodactyl's *Pterodactyl* and The Dirty Faces' *Superamerican* and *Get Right With God*; Explosions in the Sky's *All of a Sudden I Miss Everyone* (Temporary Residence); and Brother Ali's opus *The Undisputed Truth* (Rhymesayers).

All you have to do is tell us, in 50 words or less, which of this issue's featured artists you get sprung for and why. The most interesting (and not gross) answer will win the prizes below.

ONE GRAND-PRIZE WINNER RECEIVES: The Quiet Life army jacket, polo shirt, three t-shirts, a copy of their *Camera Club* 'zine, and a copy of each of the CDs listed above.

THREE RUNNERS-UP WILL RECEIVE: One The Quiet Life t-shirt and a copy of each of the CDs listed.

Entries will be accepted via standard mail and email. Entries must be received by May 1, 2007. Send your answers (and shirt size) to XLR8R's "Get Sprung" Contest, 1388 Haight St. #105, San Francisco, CA 94117 or email contest@xlr8r.com with "XLR8R's Get Sprung Contest" in the subject line.



www.thequietlife.com, www.brahrecords.com, www.k7.com, www.virgin.net, www.rhymesayers.com, www.temporaryresidence.com, www.defendmusic.com

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BITTER BASTARD'S "HOW TRUE IS YOUR CREW?" QUIZ

Think your DJ posse is the bee's knees? Well, Bastard's gone and worked the whole process down to a science for you. Take his test and see if your crew really is the shit, or just a smelly facsimile.



How true is your crew?

1. DETERMINE YOUR LONGEVITY.

Add 1 point for every month your crew has been DJing (starting from your first public performance), for a maximum of 50 points.

2. WHAT DO YOU PLAY?

Add 5 points if you play hip-hop, techno, house, grime, dubstep, drum & bass, funk, soul, or any other music that's actually danceable. Add 1 point if you play indie rock, punk, ironic metal, mash-ups, or white-guy hip-hop. Subtract 10 points if you've ever played a Mickey Avalon track.

3. WHAT?! YOU ACTUALLY HAD THAT GUY GUEST DJ AT YOUR DIESEL STORE GIG?

Minus 50, shitface. No, seriously. Subtract 50 points. Don't even look at question #4 before you strike that from your tally.

4. DO YOU HAVE A HANDLER?

(As in, does someone carry your record bag?) Sweet. Give yourself 5 points, and buy the sad fucker a drink next time. Give yourself 10 points if it's a girl.

5. DO YOU BATTLE?

Add 10 points for every DJ battle you've won. If they were "laptop battles," you get π number of points (that's 3.14159).

6. WHAT'S YOUR CREW NAME?

Right off the bat, subtract 10 points if you took the name of your "day job" and added the suffix "soundsystem" or "selectors" to it. Subtract another 10 points if that daytime place of work is a restaurant, record store, or print/web publication.

7. IF YOU'RE A "SOUNDSYSTEM"

and you don't actually bring your own rig to gigs, chop another 10.

8. SUBTRACT ANOTHER 5 POINTS FOR EACH OF THE FOLLOWING WORDS THAT APPEAR IN YOUR CREW'S NAME:

Solid, Funk(y), Jive, Rock, Steady, So, Junk(y/ies), Cold, Cut, Chill(in'), Grand, Street, Master, One (1), Hood, C/Kool, Side, or any compass direction.

9. FOR PHUN, GIVE YOURSELF 2 POINTS FOR EVERY WORD YOU INTENTIONALLY MISSPELLED (THIS INCLUDES PUNS).

If someone points out the spelling mistake later (making you realize that you never knew how to spell), add 20 sympathy points... dumb ass.

10. DO YOU PUT YOUR DEGREE IN THE AFFILIATIONS AFTER YOUR DJ NAME?

Well, you should. DJ BJBB (BFA/MFA/XLR8R/Git Ruff Croo) just racked up another 10 points.

TALLY YOUR POINTS.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

NOW TOTAL THEM UP.

75 points or more: Crazy Legs was probably the best man at your wedding.

25-74 points: You know Diplo as "Wes." Big ups to you on that.

24 points or less: Seriously, Carlos D. Give that shit up now.

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SOIL & PIMP SESSIONS

A JAPANESE COLLECTIVE INJECTS SOME REAL PSYCHEDELIA INTO THE ACID JAZZ GENRE.

The stage at Camden Jazz Café in London is a riot of Japanese musicians rocking rainbow-colored boutique hip-hop wear, skater steez, and '70s gangster suits. The saxophonist thrusts his instrument towards all four corners of the crowd before dropping to his knees and soloing his sax like it's an electric guitar. As he finishes, the six-piece band launches into a crescendo of jazz. The drummer roars like an animal, the trumpet ricochets around the stage, and the pimped-out frontman—referred to as “The Agitator”—feels the groove, rocking his head like a believer seized by the spirit and warbling, “Ahhhhhhhhhh! Can you feeel thissssss?”

Ladies and gentlemen, fasten your seat belts. This is death jazz, as performed by Tokyo's mind-blowing musical collective Soil & Pimp Sessions.

Soil & Pimp annihilates stereotypes, bringing a heavy metal-meets-rock-meets-1980s hip-hop ethic to the jazz arena. Their smash-and-grab, almost kitschy style doesn't dilute jazz tradition; rather, their sublime musicianship—coupled with a youthful, nihilistic approach to playing (they literally thrash their instruments)—gives them the kind of revolutionary rebel status not witnessed since the jazz scene's formative years.

The group started in 2000 in a coffee bar in Roppongi, a hipster district of Tokyo. It was originally a free-for-all titled Soil & Hemp, a jam session for experimental musicians. Saxophonist Motoharu explains. “We knew all these musicians from the hip-hop, rock, Latin, jazz, and reggae scenes. Although people had their specialist area, everyone was open and inspired by a huge range of sounds. Yet the scenes were separate. The sessions were a place where everything could come together freely.”

Vital to the night's success was Shacho, a DJ, promoter, and all-around music and style fanatic who, although unable to sing or play, guided the sessions like a guerrilla conductor with his repertoire of emotive shout-outs, ad-hoc instructions (“Break it doooooown,” “Oh-yeah-oh-yeah-oh”), and fragmented prose.

Out of these sessions, Soil & Pimp—the hardcore collective of Motoharu, Tabu Zombie (trumpet), Josei (piano), Akita Goldman (bass), Midoryn (drums), and Shacho (“The Agitator”)—was born. At their first major gig, Japan's prestigious Fuji Rock Festival, they tore the house down and soon signed to Japanese label Victor Entertainment to release their first album, *Pimpin'*, in June 2004.

UK world music honcho Gilles Peterson came knocking at their door and, soon after championing them on his Radio 1 Worldwide show, he signed *Pimp Master* (which the band refers to as their first “full album”) to his new indie label Brownswood. Amazingly, the album captures the virtuoso anarchy of their live shows, with breakneck tracks like “Avalanche” and “Suffocation” sitting next to more spiritually inspired compositions such as “Waltz For Goddess” and “A Wheel Within a Wheel.”

“The album is our feelings, souls, and worlds in sound,” says Shacho. “We are music lovers who have grown up being inspired by many different cultures, yet we feel them like they are one and our own.”

Pimp Master is out now on Brownswood Recordings.
www.soilpimp.com, www.brownswoodrecordings.com



A TALE OF TWO CITIES

Camilo Jose Vergara's *Invincible Cities* is an online map of urban decay.

Photographer Camilo Jose Vergara has been documenting urban decay in the U.S. since the '70s. On his website, this Chilean native tells the somewhat Dickensian tale of two troubled cities—Camden, New Jersey and Richmond, California—through time-lapse photographs of specific corners, houses, people, and trees, watching them crumble, disappear and, sometimes, get put back together again. But what's most unique about the site is the arrangement of the images, which form a revolutionary sort of digital map.

"Before there even were websites, I used to think of how spider webs have a center, with lines that circle around it," says Vergara, 62. "What if you cover a city, where all these intersections point from where you photograph, and you continue doing this over time? You've captured the life of the city."

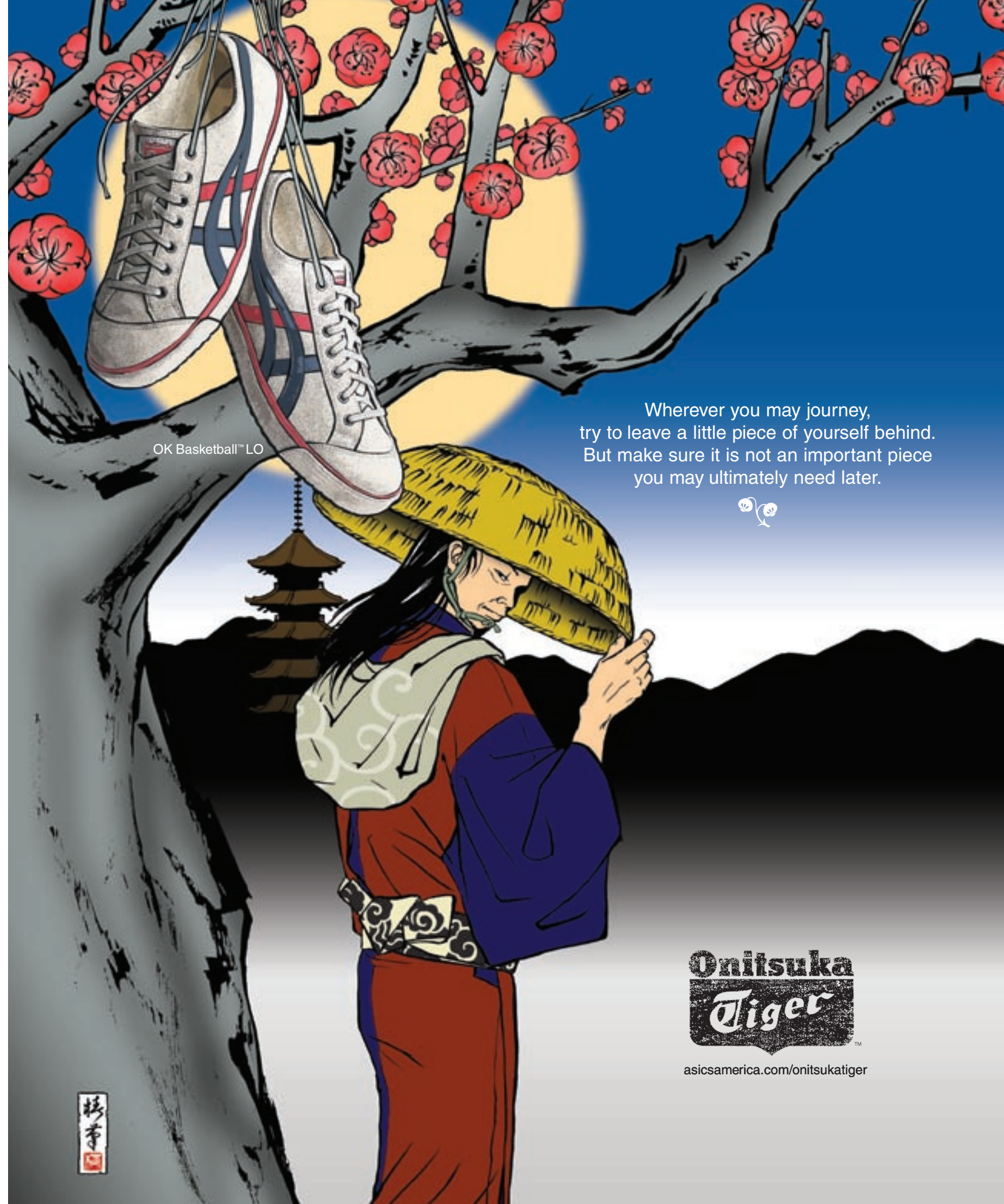
Vergara began shooting Richmond in 2005, when he linked with sponsors the Ford Foundation and Rutgers University to launch *Invincible Cities*, but he's been documenting Camden

since the tumultuous 1970s. "You can understand how the Bronx, with its big buildings, got out of control—a tenant on the fifth floor of a huge apartment building has no [power]," he says. "But, in Camden, it was individual homes. You figured there they had some control, but it just happened the same way."

With seven published works, including 1999's *American Ruins* and 2005's *How the Other Half Worships*, to his credit, Vergara sees *Invincible Cities* as part of an overarching "Encyclopedia of the American Ghetto," ("It can be an internet encyclopedia but I'd like to do a book shaped like the Bible," he explains). Currently, he's developing a database for Harlem, where he's lived since the '70s.

"I'm particularly interested in what Harlem has lost," he says. "There was very much of what blacks call 'down-home' flavor here. Now, people are selling Harlem with that, but what do they see when they get there? The Gap." *Jesse Serwer*
invinciblecities.camden.rutgers.edu

Grant at N 6th Street, Camden, NJ from Camilo Jose Vergara's Invincible Cities photo series



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WHAT IS IT?: KUDURO

Loose limbs and driving drums are the signatures of the hard-ass African techno craze.

Move over, *baile* funk. The newest word in Portuguese bass music is *kuduro*, a genre that hails from South Central... South Central Africa, that is. Bubbling up from the ghettos of this former Portuguese colony, *kuduro* (which translates as "hard ass") combines the sounds of European techno and hard house with insistent, often vocoder-filtered Creole vocals and driving rhythms inspired by native dance genres like *kizomba* and *semba* (the predecessor of samba).

According to F Communications' resident Afro-house expert, French DJ/producer Frédéric Galliano, the music—and the curiously aggressive, rubber-limbed booty dancing that goes with it—was created by Angolan Tony Amado in 1996. "[Tony's] idea was to do real Angolan music with the power of house music with the traditional ancestral percussion," says Galliano, who first encountered the genre during an April 2005 trip to Luanda, the country's capital. In January, he released *Frédéric Galliano Presents Kuduro Sound System* (Frikwiwa), and he's currently working on a project that brings *baile* funk MCs from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil together with *kuduro* beats.

"The average *kuduro* beat is quite a bit faster than *baile* funk, and it's got a lot more auto-tuned, Cher 'Believe'-type vocal effects," explains Vancouver, BC DJ Paul Devro, a bass fiend who discovered the genre when Lisbon, Portugal-based Buraka Som

Sistema hit him up on MySpace. BSS are a Portuguese-Angolan DJ/production crew that has played alongside the likes of Klaxons and MSTKRFT, and recently remixed Diplo's Brazilian ingénues Bonde Do Role. Their *From Buraka to the World* EP is *kuduro*-influenced, but tracks like the insistent "Sem Makas" boast more sophisticated production and far less of the raw vocals that are a staple in Angolan productions.

There's some debate as to whether or not BSS are the genuine article. ("*Kuduristas* are really critical of Portuguese people who try to do *kuduro*," says Galliano. "The composition of *kuduro* beats are really, really strict."). Nonetheless, the group is largely responsible for introducing the MP3-blog fiends to the *kuduro* sound and pushing the music to the world (via sales of the EP on iTunes).

"A lot of *kuduro* has that raw drum feel to it—if you deliver it right, the crowd's gonna be into it," says Devro, who rocks unsuspecting clubgoers with the sound at his Salon Des Bourgeoisie parties. Meanwhile, Galliano is taking a more purist approach. "I want to play *kuduro* as (they do in) Luanda: sexy, funky, underground, dirty," he says. "Don't forget: The boss of rhythm is Africa!" *Vivian Host*
Check www.xlr8r.com for a special *kuduro* mix from Paul Devro.
www.myspace.com/fredericgalliano, www.pauldevro.com,
www.myspace.com/burakasomsistema

EATS TAPES

SAN FRANCISCO'S MUTANT DISCO PUNKS GET ON THE VENGABUS.

Wolf Blitzer: CNN anchor, or one who blitzes wolves? For San Francisco duo Eats Tapes, the newsman's name isn't just a pun that lovingly weaves its way onto the tracklist of their second full-length, *Dos Mutantes* (we'll get to that pun later). "That guy's name is his soul," exclaims member Marijke Jorritsma. "He's a furious techno track!"

Such latent humor is found not in Eats Tapes' lyrics (which hardly exist) but in the squiggly, warped, electro-acid beats that have propelled the pair's DIY sound out of Oakland basement parties and onto European stages. "We're totally into disassociative humor—things that don't really make sense but make, like, weird connections that are funny," explains Jorritsma. "Like *Dos Mutantes*: that idea of us being weird mutants in the scene," not to mention nodding to tropicalia pioneers Os Mutantes.

Jorritsma and partner in crime—and rent—Greg Zifcak met while they were both working at a restaurant in Portland, OR. Zifcak was producing jungle tracks in his studio apartment as Mama Tiger; "And I was his biggest fan!" Jorritsma recounts. Her introduction to electronic music, however, was steeped in guiltier pleasures. "I was in Europe for a while, and listening to electronic music, but it was really cheesy," she notes. "I was also in Mexico, where you can go to any small-town discotheque any night of the week and rave out to Vengaboys." Perhaps not a surprise, then, that Eats Tapes recently covered the Vengaboys' anthem "We Like to Party!"

Trance horns and filter sweeps are just the tip of the iceberg for Eats Tapes. In their mélange, you'll also find plenty of techno, house, 8-bit, and homemade noise. It's referential, but don't call it ironic: "A lot of people ask us about that," says Jorritsma. "We'll play everything from an autonomous tekno—with a 'K'—anarchist space to an art gallery to, like, a proper rave, and I think people are always wondering how sincere we are. But we really are sincere."

"We're definitely liked by noise people and experimental rock hipsters," adds Zifcak. "Sometimes they're even confused by each other," Jorritsma says, swooping back in. "We played this show in Leeds with Printed Circuit, [which] was more like synth-pop, and we played with a noise band there, and then we went to Glasgow to play with these bass music guys... Two of them ended up talking on the phone later, and were really confused about why we would play the other one's show."

That they finish—and sometimes clobber—each other's sentences is just one facet of Eats Tapes' artistic and domestic partnership, and it seems obvious that there's a deeper story to be told here—a lyrical ballad waiting to emerge. What would that sound like?

"Vengaboys' 'We Like to Party!,'" replies Jorritsma, without a shred of doubt.

Dos Mutantes is out now on Tigerbeat6. www.eatstapes.com

Words Ken Taylor
Photo Ryan Prouty



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Gary Hustwit's forthcoming film, *Helvetica*, shows global uses of the typeface (clockwise from top left): the original letterpress version, lettering on top of a New York City bus; a bathroom sign in London; New York subway signs; an advertisement in Berlin; lettering on a garbage truck in Amsterdam.

TO HEL AND BACK

A cinematic look at the Helvetica typeface's not-so-typical place in our world.

As Plexifilm's president and head producer, Gary Hustwit's usual pursuits are music-related—everything from the recent Detroit techno doc *High Tech Soul* to Wilco's *I Am Trying to Break Your Heart* has passed through his productive hands. His latest project, *Helvetica*, focuses on the social, historical, and artistic implications of a singular typeface, but he says he approached the film "just like a rock 'n' roll documentary." Combining interviews with designers young and old, *Helvetica* tells a very visual tale of how the modernist font became so ubiquitous and controversial in today's ad-savvy world. *Ken Taylor*
www.helveticiamovie.com

XLR8R: What do you like most about the Helvetica typeface?

Gary Hustwit: There's a feeling that Helvetica has that I like. It's not even about the way the lower case "e" is shaped or anything; it's more about the emotional, visual impact that it gives off when I see a word set in it. My family always flew on American Airlines and, of course, everything on American [font-wise] is in Helvetica. So I think part of me maybe remembers something about that, like the excitement of travel. Most of your reaction to a typeface is based on where you've seen it before, where else it's been used.

It was created as a neutral font.

Now it's loaded with meaning because all these different corporations, and everything from The Beatles' *White Album* to the space shuttle has got Helvetica all over it.

How does the film approach Helvetica's more controversial aspects?

There's a very clear divide among graphic designers, artists, architects, or whoever—this sort of order versus chaos. And Helvetica is obviously on the side of order and rational design and clarity and logic. Where, on the other side, you've got emotional, subjective, interpretive design. So I think it's really kind of the modernist side of graphic design versus the more post-modernist, grunge, and

punk rock. That's one source of the controversy. The other is that—in Helvetica's case—it's a default: It's on everyone's computer. People who really think about graphic design think it's a cop-out [to use it] just because it's there. And when people use it, they don't understand how to use it, or the history of the typeface, or what it should be used for.

What should it be used for?

[Laughs] People who have typographic experience or knowledge [will say] there are kind of a set of rules of things that you shouldn't do with type if you want it to be readable, *et cetera*. There are other people that think, "Hey, it's a free-for-all. As long as you like it, who cares what other people think about it?"



A still from *40 Bands, 80 Minutes*

SCENE POINTS

Three DVDs get wild and sweaty inside your favorite micro-music communities.



EXPERIMENTAL EVERYTHING

40 Bands/80 Minutes! (Sounds Are Active, \$10.98) documents a Monday night all-ages show at Los Angeles' Il Corral (a former sweatshop), where 40 bands each played two-minute sets. Covering everything from post-hip-hop (Bizzart vs.

Demonslayer) to sludge metal (Harassor) to sheer insanity (Explogasm, I Rape Nick Lachey), it's a glimpse into the anything-goes mentality of L.A.'s experimental rock underground. Notable moments include a "performance" from local Rob Williams, who makes a complex ham sandwich with his feet, and the cathartic last show from The Wives. Some bands pack enough pre-tentiousness in two minutes to make Thurston Moore blush, but the film is ultimately charming, making one wish more shows were this concise. *Josiah Hughes*
www.40bands80minutes.com, www.soundsareactive.com



GRIME TIME

The *Lord of the Mic* series is organized like a boxing match, where UK grime's youngest, hungriest MCs face off in three rounds, with a bonus final fight. Highlights of the nine battles on **Lord of the Mic II** (Hotheadz Ent., £8.99) include a bugged-out set of freestyles from Earz, and a dramatic, obscen-

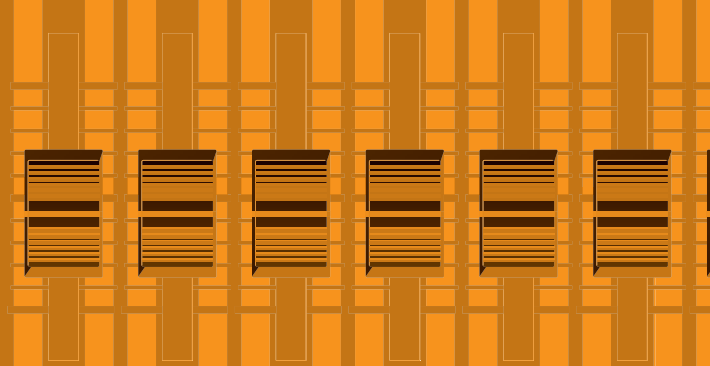
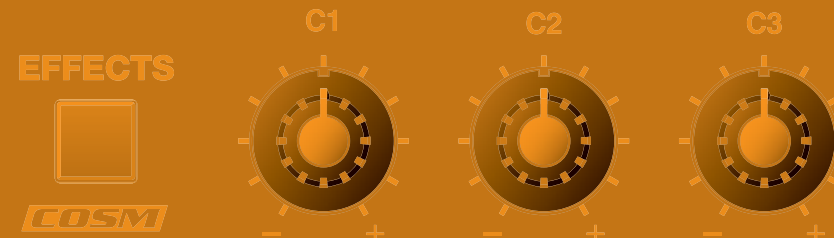
ity-filled session between the murderous Demon and lanky, humorous Bashy, who spends time sucking on a lollipop when not spitting (literally) at the camera. Hosted by lovable stoner Jammer and filmed entirely in dark basements, the flick captures the gritty aesthetic and the wild passion of grime, although only the staunchest *bwoy* on road or the most serious avant-rap nerd will make it through all 105 intense minutes. *Tyra Bangs*
www.hotheadzpromotions.com



TECHNO FEVER

Living for the weekend is bittersweet, a point that **Feiern** (Intergroove, \$26) drives home. With candid, touching interviews about life, love, and loss—and jerky montages that simulate how your eyeball sees in low-light, Ecstasy-drenched states of mind—this German documentary strives to

articulate the fragile skeins that bind avid clubbers together. Although it's not overly professional (you can see people's mic clips, the club scenes tend to go on too long), the 80-minute *Feiern* is a charmingly intimate portrait of a few Berliners (Villalobos and Luciano, among them) recounting the most memorable club moments of their lives. Be forewarned: the film is in German with English, French, and Spanish subtitles—best not to watch when you're *too fucked up*. *Vivian Host*
www.intergroove.de



"After about five minutes, I was hooked on the MV."
 —RZA, Wu Tang Clan



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MICHOACAN

A HYPER PALO ALTO PRODUCER CATCHES DISCO FEVER.

From his mile-a-minute chatter, you'd never know Fernando Miranda Rios is fighting a fever. Rios is high on Cubase VST plug-ins, rave memories, and the tracks he makes as Michoacan—and there's some cold medicine in the mix too.

A native of East Palo Alto, CA, Rios got his start making hip-hop tapes with his brother, but a fateful disco encounter changed all that. "I heard Space, the 'Magic Fly' record, and it was very hip-hop to me!" he recalls. "It was very stripped down, very basic." That French electronic novelty from 1977 paved the way for Rios' summer of rave. "I didn't even know this [scene] existed. I loved disco and old grooves. Music was my thing since I was young. So when I found house music, techno, whatever, I just got captivated! I still make rap music with my brother, but this was about 1994, and raves were tight! We'd go to parties Friday, Saturday, even Sunday."

As a nod to his parents' background, Rios adopted the Mexican state of Michoacan as his *nom de wax*, and started building a home studio piece-by-piece. Like mad homebrew studio predecessors from Lee Perry to Giorgio Moroder, Rios subscribes to the theory that if it fits in a track, it goes in—be it a new sound effect or his own singing voice. "I do everything on my MPC 2000XL and my computers," he explains. "I can spend hours dropping in plug-ins and it sounds like I bought 10 new synthesizers."

Listening to records like 2005's "2 Bullets (Disaster)" on Grayhound, it's easy to see why Rios is pumped to spend all day experimenting in the studio. Over a stealthy programmed groove, Rios croons a disco-punk chorus (even backed by obligatory cowbells) that gives way to soothing synth

chimes. On more recent releases, like the *Play Your Part* EP and "Basshead," the mix becomes even more eclectic, with new wave and computerized textures bumping against rock vocals, all smoothed out by an insistent disco-house pulse.

It all bodes well for the day Michoacan settles in with a label and concocts the epic LP that right now bumps only in his head. "I like waking up at eight with a cup of coffee, go in the studio, stay in there 'til midnight," says Rios frantically. "I just get a bass sound, a dope kick going, and start experimenting. I don't want to get stuck in a certain sound; I change it up. I want to sing more, make fuller songs. I want to have live musicians, make indie-rock-psychedelic-spaced-out shit."

Don't expect Rios to stop the torrent of 12" records, though, as a fast response time is the only way to keep up with his caffeine-fueled production. "Right now, I'm living beat to beat. My dream is to be a producer with people, bands, artists, just myself. My thing is the studio, that's where I feel really comfortable."

Michoacan's *Play Your Part* (Bear Entertainment), "Basshead" (Lektroluv), and "She's Sent (Heaven)" (Tiny Sticks) are out now. www.myspace.com/michoacanmusic

Words Rob Geary
Photo Morgan Howland
Our Lady of Guadalupe
Painting Vladimir Cuevas





HYDRA HEAD SHOWCASE

Thursday, March 15, 7pm
Pelican, Jesu, Big Business, Daughters, Oxbow, Stephen Brodsky's Octave Museum

Emo's Annex Tent
603 Red River St, All ages
www.hydrahead.com/v3

TIGERBEAT6 SHOWCASE

Saturday, March 17, 9pm
Kid 606, Clipd Beaks, White Williams, Dandi Wind, Star Eyes, Oonce Oonce

Beauty Bar
617 E 7th St, 21+
www.tigerbeat6.com

FANATIC PROMOTION SHOWCASE

Saturday, March 17, 8pm
Girl Talk, 65daysofstatic, Bang Gang, Pink Nasty, The House of Apples & Eyeballs (The Octopus Project & Black Moth Super Rainbow), The Berg Sans Nipple

Elysium
705 Red River St, 21+
www.fanaticpromotion.com

ENVISION MANAGEMENT & NINJA TUNE SHOWCASE

Saturday, March 17, 8pm
Amon Tobin, Kid Koala, Yppah, Plaster, Bleubird

The Parish Room
214 E. 6th St, 21+
www.ninjatune.net

Check XLR8R's SXSW Gig Guide at www.xlr8r.com

TOUR DE FORCE

Yellow Arrow offers a text tour of DC's punk monuments.

Any visitor to the nation's capital knows there are plenty of walking tours to be taken, spiraling around monuments, museums, and the eight million buildings that make up just the Department of the Treasury. But the tours given by Yellow Arrow, a tech-savvy group of psycho-geographers, tell a much different story. Yellow Arrow's mission is to have the people of DC tell their own histories; they've marked a series of super-personal sites with yellow arrow cut-outs, each of which corresponds to a phone number. When passers-by text that number, a personal message about that site is transmitted back to the user's phone. The group's latest project, Capitol of Punk, is a text tour featuring sites chosen

from afar. Here are a few key spots to chat about next time Ian MacKaye sends you a text. Ken Taylor
www.yellowarrow.net



MADAM'S ORGAN

It's now a blues bar up the street that boasts visits from Barbara and Jenna Bush, but in its heyday, Madam's Organ (2318 18th Street NW in the Adams Morgan neighborhood) was a music and art co-op where Ian's Mackaye's first band, Teen Idles, played their first show opening for Bad Brains. You can still find the Crooked Beat record store in the basement.



D.C. SPACE

See that Starbucks on the corner of 7th and E Streets? It once housed d.c. space, one of the scene's homegrown art galleries run primarily by Cynthia Connolly, who had a particularly DIY stance on booking shows. She'd rather give the tiny room to unknowns who'd draw 30 people than bump them if Nirvana or Hole needed a last-minute gig. Something to sip on.



OLD 9:30 CLUB

The new 9:30 Club still deserves plenty of props, but the old space at 930 F Street NW was the rat-infested ground zero for harDCore. In fact, according to Joe Lally of Fugazi, rats and other nastiness seem to factor into just about every story about the place, aside from Minor Threat's "sell-out" reunion show, where they pelted the crowd with coins.

Get more info and view 10 videos at: www.yellowarrow.net/capitolofpunk

It is no coincidence.

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COCKROACHES ON A DARE,
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SOMEWHERE.
TECNOBREGA IN BRAZIL
Brazilian "cheesy techno" brings the boom... and a new music-industry model.

Brega, in Portuguese, means something of bad taste; it also refers to a genre of Brazilian popular music whose songs are usually about heartache, and include questionable use of synths and strings. Despite being virtually ignored by the media of Rio and São Paulo, *brega* has been hugely popular for decades with the *favela* dwellers of Northern Brazil, particularly in Belém do Para. Eventually, *brega* met electronic music, birthing the rudimentary dance music known as *tecnobrega* (roughly translated: "cheesy techno").

Tecnobrega revolves around various soundsystems (*aparelhagem*), like Treme Terra Tupinambá

(Tupinambá Ground Shaker) and Poderoso Rubi (Mighty Ruby); despite hailing from Brazil's poorest regions, these soundsystems operate complex networks of computers, lights, special effects, and speakers.

The distribution of *tecnobrega* is similar to the hip-hop mixtape game in the U.S.. CDs are only sold in big, open-air markets; all copies are "pirated," but getting music for free isn't problem—it's the solution. Selling mixtapes at the market is an artistic boon for the DJs, allowing them to increase their popularity and get more gigs.

To get more airplay, artists make special tracks

praising radio stations and soundsystems. When you go to a concert, not only can you buy a copy of the gig as soon as it is over, but you can buy a copy beforehand, then give them your name and pay to have it shouted out during the show—the ultimate in customization. CD-Rs are so yesterday in this scene; even MP3 compilations with 10 albums on one disc are being replaced by DVD-Rs that hold multiple gigabytes' worth of information.

Ronaldo Lemos, head of Creative Commons Brazil and professor at FGV Law School, believes *tecnobrega* is evidence of a new music-industry model. "In this scene, the 'pirates' are incorporated in the music business chain," he says. "Nobody distributes music as cheap and as fast as they do. The appropriation of technology by the ghetto is happening globally. What's cool is that they have created

an environment where intellectual property is not an important factor in their business model."

Belém native Vladimir Cunha—who's directing upcoming documentary, *Brega S/A*—disagrees. "The only people who make money out of *tecnobrega* are the soundsystem owners," he retorts. "Artists get paid really badly. On average, a six-piece band gets 150 dollars a gig. At first, piracy could be perceived as a good thing, because it's spreading the artist's work, but in fact they have to rely solely on live concerts to survive." *Bruno Natal*
www.bregapop.cjb.net

Dancers at a Tupinambá event that took place in the parking lot of a restaurant near the center of Belém. DJ Paty Potencia plays on a raised stage known as the "altar." (Photos by Gustavo Godinho)



SHOT CALLING

Wake Up Call flips the script on telemarketing to bring new sounds to the masses.

"I read the phonebook like a novel when I was a kid," says Alexi Morrissey, a conceptual artist based in Pittsburgh. While Morrissey, a former graffiti artist from Boston, was searching for a hotel-style wake-up call service, he discovered robotic dialing—suddenly, all his attention was turned back to the phone. *Wake Up Call*, an online project created by Morrissey and Damien Miller, allows users to choose from over 70 audio artworks, and have that work delivered to any phone number. The recordings range from straight-up music (including acoustic bluegrass jams from Nashville's David Long and electronic music from Creation is Crucifixion's Nathan Martin) to poetry, sound art, and anti-Bush cheer-

leading. Even its crank-call side is artistic: In homage to John Giorno's *Dial-a-Poem*, the project's calls appear to come from Manhattan's Museum of Modern Art.

Wake Up Call is not just an art delivery system or a utilitarian service, but a repurposing of technology; it takes a modern inconvenience and turns it into something desirable. "People don't like the fact that their telephone allows others to take advantage of them," says Morrissey. "But people like cellos and poetry. This is the robotic call that you want to get."

Justin Hopper ILLUSTRATION Colin Strandberg
www.tele-art.org

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BRAH! RECORDS

ONEIDA'S NEW RECORD LABEL, AND ITS PUNK ROCK FLAGSHIP BAND, FLOURISHES.

To most record labels, signing Pittsburgh rock 'n' roll iconoclasts The Dirty Faces would seem like a bad bet. Their music is too experimental—feedback-laden and lyrically post-ironic—for staunch rock fans, but so rife with Iggy Pop and AC/DC gee-tar nods that the black-framed-glasses set cringes. The band's image? Bad boy-and-girl chic without the chic. That's not to mention The Dirty Faces' legal issues—that singer T. Glitter swipes whole verses from Pete Doherty and Bob Dylan is just the beginning. (For example, Glitter missed one New York City show by getting arrested, unbeknownst to his bandmates, between sound check and first note.)

But for Brah!, a record label run by New York minimalist psych-rockers Oneida, a great, underexposed rock group is always worth the risk. "Here's a band that we'd been telling people about [forever], and is probably the best live band in existence right now, being completely ignored," says Oneida drummer and Brah! Records co-founder Kid Millions, about his simple decision to sign The Dirty Faces.

Brah! Records formed when Oneida's label, Jagjaguwar, passed on releasing ex-Oneida frontman Papa Czazee's psychedelic country outfit Oakley Hall. After a few beers at a New York watering hole, Kid Millions and some friends dug up Jagjaguwar boss Chris Swanston's phone number and left him a message demanding their own record label for projects they felt were being ignored. "We were kind of serious, but kind of joking," says Millions. "The next morning I had an email waiting for me saying, 'Let's do this.'"

At the tail-end of 2006, The Dirty Faces became the first band to release a sophomore record on Brah!; it was *Get Right With God*—the follow up to 2005's label kickoff *Superamerican*—and it would never have been possible without the backing of such commercial-suicide-minded men.

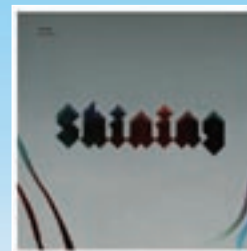
Brah! Records' 2007 lineup includes new discs from Sinoia Caves (solo music from Jeremy Schmidt of Black Mountain); Nurse and Soldier, the side project of Oneida keyboardist Fat Bobby; and possibly *Underground Economy*, the third album in The Dirty Faces' trilogy. But while the label's roster and eclectic tastes have solidified, Kid Millions isn't confident the Brah! name is pulling indie-rock stock options quite yet.

"I would love it if people thought Brah! was an identifiable, awesome label," says Millions. "But it's not. First people have to buy *some* records."



DAMERO
Happy in Grey CD

Berlin's **BPitch** expands their sonic palette with softened pop tunes and hushed anthems. **Marit Posch** is **Damero**, a cosmopolitan pop project that hints at classical training, a love for electronic music and a knack for melody. Having jammed with label mates like **Apparat** and **Modeselektor**, Ms. Posch is lucky to learn from some of the best and talented enough to apply it beautifully.



SHINING
Grindstone CD

One of the biggest selling Rune Grammofon artists in America, and it's easy to see why. **Shining** are quite unlike anything you've heard before. Speed trash or soundscape-thrash or maximal prog. Tempo shifts are ridiculous, riffage is off the meter and jazz gets turned inside out. "Labyrinthine, alternately creeping and brutally visceral, and certainly raucous."

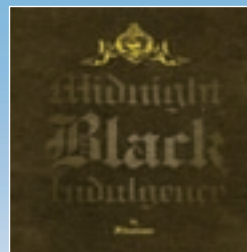
—Pitchfork Media

rune grammofon



VARIOUS ARTISTS
Cabinet Classics 1994-1998 & Cabinet Unreleased Classics 2CD/4LP

A personal delivery from **Richie Hawtin** to the electronic world. Unearthed and prepped for release on his Plus 8 label, the **Cabinet** label still represents perfection for the world's leading minimal DJ. An old Berlin stronghold, the Cabinet crew (**Daniel Paul**, **DJ Zky** and **DJ Trike**) got minimal long before it was cool. Overlooked no more.



FRIVOLOUS
Midnight Black Indulgence CD

Another Canadian-Berlin connection (**Akufen**, **Deadbeat**, etc.) lands stateside. **Frivolous** aka **Daniel Gardner** comes from the **Mutek** school, where dance music meets the vanguard of sound technology. Includes a heavy dose of jazz: "For me jazz means a looseness and a feeling that can only be created by humans."

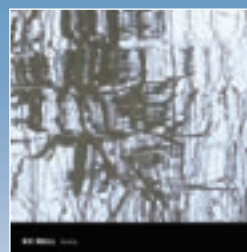
—Frivolous



CHRIST.
Blue Shift Emissions CD/2LP

Translucent harmonic bliss from this new-chill sound constructor. Rumor was he was in the **Hexagon Sun** alongside **Boards of Canada** and it is evident in his sound. Pure downtempo majesty for your igloo or your beach chair. *Blue Shift* is the second CD from **Christ**, and Benbecula, 4 years after the heralded *Metamorphic Reproduction Miracle*. Electronic music in a grand tradition.

Benbecula records



KK NULL
Fertile CD

Previously captured on record with **Chris Watson** and **Z'ev**, "Japanese noise experimetician" **KK Null** releases his first full-length for Touch, a premiere UK outer-sound label. Noise, ambient, broken-down rhythmic and pitch sculptures abound. Null was the mastermind behind seminal noise group **Zeni Geva** so you know he's got mad knowledge.



POLE
Steingarten CD/2LP

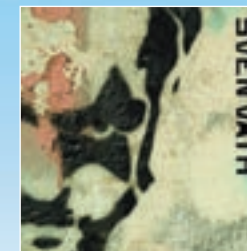
The return of the mastering master. This time, **Stefan Betke** forgoes the flirtations with hip-hop and MCs and further expands on his aquatic instrumental digi-dub. Now a sought-after remixer and producer, Betke experiments with polyrhythms, deeper and darker rhythmic loops and noisier sounds. From his classic trilogy on **Matador** to his catalog at **Mute**, Pole continues to build a legacy.



FLANGER
Nuclear Jazz (Templates/Midnight Sound) CD

Flanger's label reissues two lost sounds on one jam-packed super CD. Ten years ago, **Uwe Schmidt** and **Bernd Friedman** met up in Santiago, Chile and began to collaborate. The result was a techno-fied jazz sound which propelled the both of them to bigger heights. This is authentic future jazz.

Nonplace



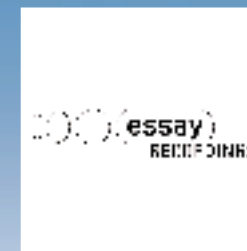
SVEN VÄTH
In The Mix: The Sound of the Seventh Season 2CD

Give it up one more time for **Väth**. His exuberance and finesse are legendary, and each year these mix CDs sum up the year in club styles. With hits like **Solid Groove's** "This is Sick," **Audion** (aka **Matt Dear**) with "Mouth to Mouth" alongside critical faves like **The Mole** and **Tom Pooks**, this is an essential document for any techno fan.



VARIOUS ARTISTS
Camping Vol. 03 CD

The third volume in the definitive library from Berlin's **BPitch**. This time, selector/label boss **Ellen Allien** picks a series of unreleased future classics from the likes of **Jahcoozi**, nu-trance icon **Fairmont**, club-killing duo **Modeselektor** and even **Uffie** sideman **Feadz**. Some tracks will get extended club treatment on the 3-volume "12" series to come. A sparkling look into the **BPitch** crystal ball.



VARIOUS ARTISTS
Essay Recordings CD/LP/12"

Essay Recordings redefines world music with each and every release. Check out **Shantel**, **Señor Coconut**, **baile funk** and **Boom Pam**. Essay continues in 2007 with Shantel's new *Disko Partizani* album, an album titled *Kosher Nostra* and the smashing **Surtek Collective** with new dance sounds from Chile. Keep your eyes, and ears, open.





An interior photo of Long Gone John's house from the *Pictures of the Gone World* exhibit

POSSESSED

The Treasures of Long Gone John is a new documentary about a modern-day pirate's quest for the ultimate kitsch.

Long Gone John collects things: stuffed animals Edward Gorey sewed himself, big-eyed Margaret Keane dolls from the 1950s, prescription pill bottles that once belonged to famous people (he owns Debbie Harry's Prozac). Though John is the mastermind behind Sympathy For the Record Industry—a gonzo label that has released music by Suicide, The White Stripes, and Hole—it's his elevation of kitsch to high art that is the subject of a new documentary, *The Treasures of Long Gone John*, and a recent art exhibition, *Pictures of the Gone World*, at Santa Ana, CA's Grand Central Art Center.

"John comes from this no-holds-barred embrace of what is typically shunned or considered bad taste," says director Gregg Gibbs, a former production designer for Rob Zombie videos, of his subject's punk-rock approach to art collecting. Though Gibbs originally intended to make a biopic, Long Gone John's reclusiveness and voracious love of underground pop art led the film in a different direction. "It's really about this bigger art movement that's going on. John plays the host—the human foundation of the subculture," says Gibbs, who interviewed artists including Frank Kozik, Takashi Murakami, Camille Rose Garcia, and Gary Baseman for the movie.

"This artwork falls outside the traditional European lineage of Giotto to Da Vinci to Vermeer to minimalism," says Gibbs. "Many of these artists' lineage starts with WWII fighter pilots painting their planes and hot rods, the psychedelic posters of the '60s and surf culture and punk rock; they've been nurtured in these subcultures in America. Their work appeals to the average Joe in America, [the kind of person who] is not allowed [by the art establishment] to figure out why Jeff Koons' vacuum cleaner is a piece of 'art.' These artists make art accessible to everyone."

With *The Treasures*, Gibbs has done a commendable job of documenting the modern-day 'low-brow' art scene, but you don't have to know your Shag from your Mark Ryden to enjoy the movie, or its coda: a 20-minute short called *The Gone World* where LGJ narrates his collection in his own nihilistic stream-of-consciousness style. *Vivian Host*
www.thetreasuresoflonggonejohn.com

Words Eric Smillie
Illustration Courtney Riot
Original Tigrics Photo Peter Szasz



TIGRICS

A HUNGARIAN NOISENIK
IN THE HEART OF A
FADED EMPIRE.

Budapest is a proud, rough city. Miles of once stately Hapsburg buildings sit under a century's film of dust, their tall windows peering down onto broad avenues. The bars, found even in underground pedestrian walkways, stay open until the wee hours. The homeless camp out in unused doorways while the city bustles.

"I travel a hell of a lot, so it's okay," states Róbert Bereznyci (a.k.a. Tigrics), when asked about the city he's lived in since he was a teenager, when he ran away from home in a nearby mining community with money he saved from tattooing. "I tattooed half the underworld in that industrial town—it made for good protection," says Bereznyci, who is always one to look on the bright side. "I was a problem child. I'm the type of guy who needs to figure out things by himself, you know?" It follows that his electronic music fuses the wild and the restless with the childish and the sublime—a vital, unorthodox combination evident on *Synki*, his new album for Highpoint Lowlife.

Bereznyci began fiddling with two tape decks and a mixer in 1995, and played in the noise band Rianás until 2000. "We played with whatever we could get, really, to disastrous effect," he jokes. "I do love and admire the ridiculousness factor in music. I'd rather sound stupid than just plain pretentious, but I also like deep, dark mixes."

In this spirit he molds a coherent album out of *Synki*'s divergent songs, each one ricocheting between inner peace and the obsessions of a hyperactive mind. "Ja'tzkin," the album's 22-minute centerpiece, counterbalances gentle ambience and field recordings of birdsong with the sounds of tumbling dice, grinding tram wheels, and off-kilter pattering.

Some of the album's tracks "were recorded straight, with everything set up around me," explains Bereznyci. "It's sort of a sport: I'm pretending to be a band and trying to do a good take that has the feel I want, rather than just edit the hell out of [the songs]. But then again, I tend to do that a lot too."

Such is the case on "203 mibajodvan": in four-and-a-half tight minutes, claustrophobic, skittering percussion and strange sounds jostle one another, then fade uneasily into a bumpy bassline and heartstring twangs from an oddly tuned guitar.

Pushed for Budapest's finer points, Bereznyci mentions pals Ovek Finn and solo minimalists Nicron and Prell, as well as the Ultrahang Foundation, which releases CD-Rs by locals and organizes an annual boundary-pushing music festival. "It's a cool city, but difficult to live in," he sums up. "It's very bureaucratic and neglected. The theory is: if you survive here, you can survive anywhere."

Synki comes out this month on Highpoint Lowlife. www.highpointlowlife.com



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GOOD STUFF

A few of Dust La Rock's favorite things.

Dust La Rock (also known as "Dusty") is the alias of Brooklyn-based graphic designer Joshua Prince, who is "30 going on 21." When he's not causing drunken havoc with his bike crew Team Awesome, trying to sell us his crappy old neurofunk drum & bass records, or walking Buddylove (his Jack Russell terrier), Prince is designing eye-popping work for the likes of Claw Money, DJ A-Trak, and The Orb. He's best known for his cheeky club flyers—which are full of "illustrative, surreal, and psychedelic subversion, and constant drug references"—but is currently at work on a series of skateboards and tees for Seattle's Manik Goods, plus pimping the sterling silver absinthe-spoon necklace he designed with BiJules NYC and collaborating with Kid Robot, Zoo York, and photographer Chris Giancy. We wanted a ride down the block on his BMX pegs, but first we asked him what's really good in Williamsburg. *Tyra Bangs*
www.dustlarock.com



2



3

1. OCD STRAIGHT RAZOR NECKLACE (PRICE VARIES)

OCD (Obsessively Chasing Dollars) is a New York-based online store and product line. In their own words: "A daily operation supplying the streets with choice goods to keep only the serious street cat looking and staying fresh. We do not produce or condone heartless streetwear or accessories. We are an online shop that manufactures our own style of whatever we feel the streets are lacking." Word up.
www.ocdnyc.com

2. GOOGLY EYE CRU PILLOW (\$40)

If you live in New York, Seattle, Phoenix, or San Fran there's no way you could miss pairs of black & white googly eye stickers on fire hydrants, mail boxes, and light posts. The Googly Eye Cru is two female artists hailing from Brooklyn whose mission is to bring life to inanimate objects. To this end, they have hand-silkscreened and constructed these 19" round cotton pillows. Each pillow has a GEC-approved label and button attached. Spread the word.
www.myspace.com/googlyeyecru

3. ALEXANDER GIRARD ALPHABET BLOCKS (\$100)

I first saw Alexander Girard's fabric, pattern, and graphic designs for Herman Miller in a book of the same name about five or six years ago, and instantly fell in love with his work. Recently, House Industries released these printed alphabet puzzle blocks incorporating some of Girard's more famous iconography and lettering. As my man Cody would say, "Something for the kids."
www.houseind.com

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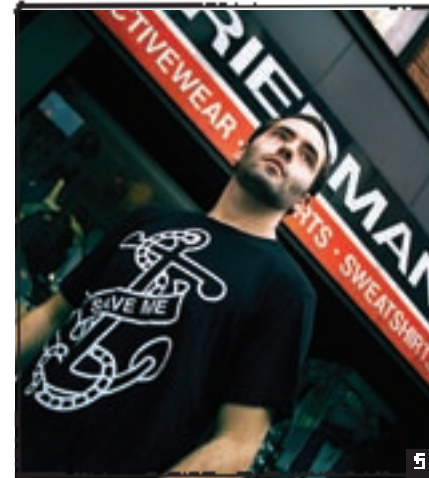
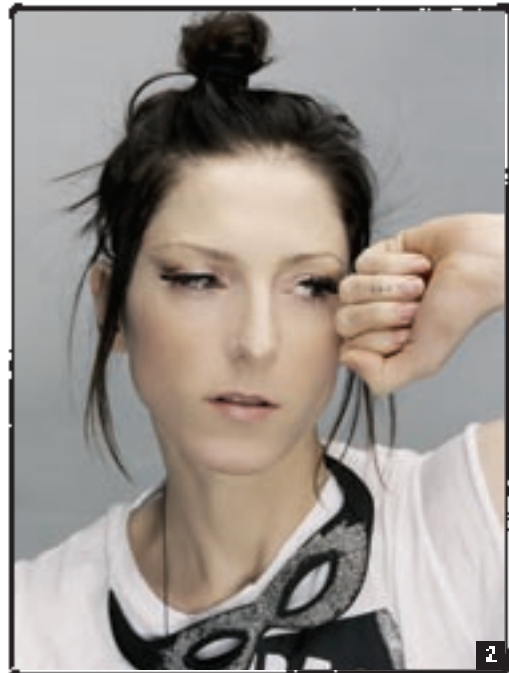
Episode 1 - DAT Politics and Zion I

Episode 1.5 - Psychedelic video freakout!! Videos by Paper Rad, Klaxons, and more

Episode 2 - Busdriver, Carl Craig, and Lindström (Out April 1)

Check it out now at <http://www.revision3.com/xlr8rtv>

XLR8R Revision3



SPIN CYCLE

News and gossip from the music world.

Twenty-first century digital boys and girls, get happy: **Bad Religion** is back in the studio and have slated their Epitaph release, a follow-up to 2004's *The Empire Strikes First*, for July 10. They'll also be headlining this year's Warped Tour. • Guess who else will be playing the same stadium parking lots this summer: Toronto hip-hop MC/producer **k-os**. For up-to-the-minute confirmations, see www.warpedtour.com. • More from the Epitaph camp: While **The Locust's** *New Erections* was just released late last month on sub-label Anti-, and **Sage Francis'** new LP, *Human The Death Dance*, is slated for an early May release, **The Coup's** **Boots Riley** has been selected as the keynote speaker for UC Berkeley's Black Graduation Ceremony on May 12. • Reunions abound at this year's **Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival**, to be held April 27-29 in Indio, CA. Among them are **The Happy Mondays**, **The Jesus & Mary Chain**, and **Rage Against the Machine**. But we're still more interested in **Mike Relm**, **Anathallo**, **Grizzly Bear**, **Jose Gonzalez**, **Spank Rock**, and **Busdriver**. • They won't

be at Coachella, but the recently reunited original members of **Dinosaur Jr.** have stepped back into the studio to record *Beyond* for Fat Possum, their first new album since 1989. Mascis, Barlow, and Murph also release their first-ever DVD, *Dinosaur Jr.: Live From the Middle East*, in May. • Indie comic **Aziz Ansari**, known for dropping references to M.I.A. and *XLR8R* into his stand-up routines and viral web-vids, has a new comedy series, *Human Giant*, launching on MTV this month. • Check out ambient techno producer **Ezekiel Honig's** new label, **Anticipate**, launched in late March with the CD and MP3 release of **Mark Templeton's** *Standing on a Hummingbird*. www.anticipaterecordings.com. • Can't get enough of that feedback-washed bastard-blues-rock? **Black Rebel Motorcycle Club** return to the scene on May 1 with *Baby 81* on RCA. • Can't get enough of those **Kid Robot**/clothing/toy collabos? Peep their newest Tilt-designed partnership with S.F.-based cobblers **JB Classics**. www.suite2206.com • DJ and man-about-town **James Friedman** recently

announced his new label with **The Rapture** called **Throne of Blood**. Look for their first U.S. release, *The Rapture's* "Whoa All Right Yeah Uh Huh (People Don't Dance No More)," featuring remixes from **Simian Mobile Disco** and **Claude VonStroke**. • **The Rapture's** good friend and producer **Ewan Pearson** is a busy man. He's currently at work on a Fabric mix, a second **Partial Arts** single for Kompakt, and producing the new **M83** album. Read up at www.ewanpearson.com. • Also in Berlin: BPitch Control head honcho **Ellen Allien** is the focus of the latest installment of *Time Out's* *Other Side* series of CD-DVD packages. Allien provides a special DJ mix and takes viewers on a visual tour of her favorite Berlin haunts. Next up on the *Other Side*: **Madlib** and **PB Wolf** do L.A. • Producer extraordinaire **9th Wonder** has amicably parted ways with his group **Little Brother**, so that they can all pursue their own projects. • It's not every day that **Peaches** receives accolades from the community at large, but

GLAAD has just nominated her for their Outstanding Music Artist award. • Still stuck in Denver on that killer stopover? Check out the city's newest gallery spot, **Limited Addiction Gallery**. www.limitedaddictiongallery.com. • Got Wii-elbow yet? If not, check out tips on turning your WiiMote and Traktor software into the ultimate DJ tool at www.djwii.com. If you're just looking for a new tennis game, though, grab Sega's new *Virtua Tennis 3*, which boasts ridiculously fun Xbox Live capabilities for the 360. • Prepare yourself for a summer of heavy listening: Currently reading new full-length opuses are **Vladislav Delay**, **Metro Area**, and **PJ Harvey**. Wiiwind!!

1. Boots Riley and Pam The Funkstress of The Coup
2. Ellen Allien
3. Mark Templeton
4. Sage Francis
5. James Friedman
6. Peaches

"TO EXPLAIN FROM REALLY FAR AWAY" MIXTAPE

BY BRENDAN FOWLER A.K.A. BARR

1. **UNK FEAT. ANDRE 3000 AND JIM JONES** "Walk It Out (Remix)" Andre 3000 destroys contemporary Southern rap culture and sounds gorgeous doing it.

2. **CHRISTINA AGUILERA** "Beautiful" (Chopped and Screwed version from the O.G Ron C *Fuck Action Action* mixtape) So damaged. So amazing.

3. **KATE BUSH** "Running Up That Hill" It's just the best song ever made. No big deal.

4. **TRACY + THE PLASTICS** "Hey Rubella" Completely triumphant, smart, and fucking j-j-j-jamming.

5. **XIU XIU** "Brooklyn Dodgers" (Acoustic version on *Fag Patrol*) I just love this in a way I don't want to talk about, but would love to share it.

6. **CLIPSE** "Keys Open Doors" You know when everyone likes something, so you try to not like it?

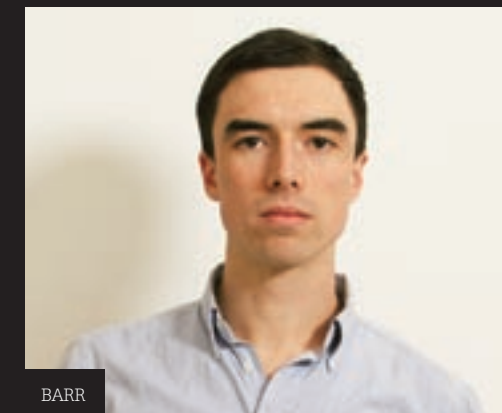
7. **FIEVEL** "Somewhere Out There" (from *An American Tail*) We all share the same moon; at least lost lovers do.

8. **CARLY SIMON** "Friend Song" (from *Pooh's Heffalump Movie*) I am going to put this song on every mixtape ever.

9. **WILL OLDHAM** "Stablemate" It is the most punishing and evil beautiful thing.

10. **THE BLOW** "Fists Up" I'm in love, and I still drive around listening to this and crying.

Barr's Summary is out now on 5RC. www.barrbarr.com



BARR



SLEIGHT OF HAND

BATTLES SHROUDS ROCK IN AN ENIGMA,
WRAPS PERCUSSION IN A PUZZLE,
AND COMES OUT WITH
BEAUTIFULLY CONFUSING MUSIC.
WORDS ANDREW PARKS PHOTOS GRACE VILLAMIL

Okay, so maybe a choir of cheerleaders was a bad idea, although it seemed brilliant at the time. Revolutionary even. “That was one of Ian’s stipulations when we started the band; I think the concept had something to do with that movie *Bring It On*,” says multi-instrumentalist Tyondai Braxton, as I sit down for a few frothy rounds of Guinness (creamy hot chocolate, in Braxton’s case) with the four very different, yet very similar members of Battles.

“[That] was one of the main reasons why I joined this band,” adds drummer John Stanier. “Not because Ian asked me, but because he said there would be a chorus line of 12 girls. Me being the red-blooded, hot male that I am, I couldn’t turn that down.”

The Ian guy everyone keeps referring to is Battles guitarist/keyboardist Ian Williams, a demigod to math rock devotees (i.e. the band geeks that actually got laid in high school) due to his defining years in the band Don Caballero.

And as for that whole backup-singers thing, it wasn’t a bullshit diversion to avoid talking to this journalist about the perils of playing in a “supergroup.” (More on that later.) The “Smells Like Teen Spirit”-esque squad was actually a high-concept starting point for a group that didn’t know what the hell they wanted to write when they formed three years ago. And, well, they still don’t—the reason being that, for Battles, nothing is off limits. Hell, if they had a mic and some loop pedals in front of them right now, I could probably tell the quartet to turn our pint glasses into a claustrophobic cocoon of noise, and that medium-rare cheeseburger over there into some sort of squishy synth line.

“I wanted them to be like pitbulls onstage—screaming and yelling,” explains Williams of his cheerleader choir idea. “But that was hard to pull off.”

“It was a good idea at the time until we started having rehearsals and there were six girls in this small practice space,” adds Braxton. “The dynamics were...”

Guitarist David Konopka hisses, purrs, and flicks his wrist like a cat batting one of those feather-on-a-stick things. Our entire booth erupts into laughter. Only I can’t help thinking that the joke’s on me. Because they can’t be serious, can they?

Of course they can.



“The goal is to find a pure form of whatever this is and not align ourselves with anything.”

— Tyondai Braxton



“It’s like

**having a goose
that can lay a golden egg**

**and
never
making
an omelette
from it.”**

- Dave Konopka

THE DESCENT

John Stanier wasn't so sure of this whole Battles idea at first. And neither was the rest of the band. Mostly because it wasn't a band, per se; more like a splatter-paint art project that grew out of Braxton and Williams watching (and admiring) each other's solo shows around New York City.

"To be perfectly honest, I had no idea what to expect," says Stanier. "I didn't know all these guys were gonna be in the band or what the sound would be. It took me three or four times of playing with them to get it. It wasn't one of those stories where I walked into the room, we started playing, and this magic happened. I almost bailed actually."

"The truth is this," says Konopka of his first session with Stanier. "The door swung open and this guy's standing there with his metal stare—ice cold, barely saying a word. I was like, 'Hey, what's up?' And he was just like, 'Hey.' Later on I asked him what's with the tough persona and he said, 'What, do you want a hug?'"

"I knew it would be good, but I also knew we had to get through a lot of bullshit," adds Williams. "For one thing, we didn't know what it would be. All I knew was I didn't want it to sound like Don Caballero. This band isn't where it is simply because of our resume."

Battles' resume doesn't just include Don Caballero and Braxton's acclaimed solo work; try Stanier's stints in Tomahawk (also featuring Mike Patton and members of The Melvins and

The Jesus Lizard) and modern metal pioneers Helmet, as well as Konopka's past in cult favorites Lynx, a group the *All Music Guide* ironically describes as "a hybrid of the creativity and style of Oxes intersecting with the melodic spirit and rhythmic mind of Don Caballero." In other words, Battles was either going to work beautifully because opposites attract... or end in Stanier stabbing someone with the sharp end of his drum stick.

"Honestly, I had sworn off playing in a band [in favor of] being self-reliant, for emulating the sound of a bunch of people playing [with loop pedals]," says Braxton, who's currently working on another solo record for Warp. "I want structure and Ian wants everything open-ended, which I wasn't used to when this started. I'm way more eager to solidify an idea so I can work with it and Ian's a little more..."

"He's a little more hippie," continues Konopka. "Ian's approach is more like Van Gogh and Tyondai's is more like [photorealist] Chuck Close."

Stanier's drumming style worked so well in Tomahawk because—as that band's primary songwriter, Duane Denison, will tell you—it's "all about stripped-down, streamlined power—very locomotive, but not in a dumb way." Again, something with the power to crush Battles' other elements, yet it doesn't. "Battles is a similar thing, but the music is way different," explains Denison. "They're almost like a futurist pop band."



SCARE TACTICS

"I dug Battles from day one," says Scott Herren (also known as Prefuse 73), who has a side project with Braxton and ex-Black Dice drummer/current Soft Circle sound sculptor Hisham Bharoocha. (Braxton also appeared on Prefuse 73's *Surrounded by Silence* LP) "The off-kilter, yet tight-as-fuck sounds appealed to me, and then the drums dropped and Tyondai was beat-boxing on that shit. I was sold, so I worked quite hard to get them on Warp and for my fans to see what they could do. Now I'm opening for those superstars!"

Battles describes their 2005 tour with Prefuse 73 and an early leg with Mars Volta as breakthrough moments, especially compared to their first show, a Christmas bill in Brooklyn with Les Savy Fav that Stanier describes as a "nightmare." And then there was their third gig, a coveted supporting slot for The Melvins, Tomahawk, and the Fantômas/Melvins Big Band.

I ask how that one went and Stanier lets out a hearty laugh. "I

remember The Melvins simply saying they thought our show was... 'interesting,'" he says.

Curious concertgoers that show up to Battles gigs simply because of its family tree might concur.

"We'll play Milwaukee or whatever and there will be some kids there early on that you can totally tell are Helmet fans—slamming beers and everything," says Konopka. "We'll start playing, and they're all just kinda like, 'What the fuck?'"

"And by the end of the show they'll like it," adds Stanier, "But they won't know why. I think it scares them."

MIRROR IMAGES

Battles will release their first-full length on Warp in May, after letting loose a trilogy of cryptic EPs on Cold Sweat, Monitor, and Dim Mak. The record finds the quartet finally bringing together a batch of songs that matches the manic intensity of their live shows—

an album that commands you to 'Move your feet, motherfucker!' like 50 layers of locked grooves. Of course, *Mirrored* also sounds like a mental patient that ran out of his meds. Look, there's a reason why the group's first three EPs carried such scrambled song titles as "B + T," "TRAS3," and "UW." And it isn't because Ian Williams wanted to fuck with us or was too lazy to think of something more lyrical. It's because Battles writes music too bizarre and otherworldly to be boiled down to blatant song titles, or masturbatory signifiers like "math rock" or "post-rock."

"The thing about Battles is that it can be math-y or whatever," explains Stanier, "but we're also blazing our own trail that's interesting to us and accessible to other people, where you don't have to be a Don Caballero or Tomahawk fan to get into it."

Seriously. Take the LP's lead single, "Atlas." While I still can't wrap my head around why it makes me want to sprint up my bedroom walls like Spiderman or bang my head (like Black Dice's recent rhythmic-as-hell records), I do know it's the best song the band has written.

The rest of *Mirrored*'s puzzle pieces are also much less obvious than putting a guitar-hero part here, or metronomic drum lead there. For the first time, the group dabbles in vocals, if you can call them that. "I don't mind doing instrumental music, but there are some unnecessary constraints along with that," says Braxton, when I ask him about that decision.

"I wasn't opposed to being in an instrumental band either, but once I heard Ty's solo records and saw him live I thought we were

wasting an amazing talent," explains Stanier.

"It's like having a goose that can lay a golden egg and never making an omelette from it," adds Konopka. "The vocals are extremely tasteful, too. He didn't come out of the gate sounding like Lisa Loeb or Conor Oberst." Or, as Braxton explains it, "There isn't too much Rahzel-type beat-boxing. Thank God."

CHAOS THEORY

It remains to be seen how people will react to Battles' most refined, self-assured release. Frankly, I've been listening to *Mirrored* for two weeks straight now and *still* don't get it. Not in a frustrating, Berklee College of Music way, where a band's too busy showing off their knowledge of time signatures to write satisfying songs; it's just hard to grasp why this galloping guitar, that nail-gun drum, and completely nonsensical singing create such order in chaos.

It seems it is why the most apt metaphor for *Mirrored* might be a chart Battles kept in their recording studio while making the record. It listed abstract sound ideas only they could understand, with parts named "layer one in," "skipper," and "Christmas mountain." "It'd be like, 'Let's double the 'Angelica Houston' part and go right into the 'funky coyote' two bars later,'" explains Stanier of their system.

I say "system," but that's assuming there is a method to the madness. The truth is, Battles is a puzzle not even its members know how to put together.

They can try, though. "The goal is to find a pure form of whatever this is," says Braxton, "and not align ourselves with anything."

Battles' *Mirrors* is out May 15 on Warp. www.bttls.com, www.warprecords.com



Battles (from left):
Ian Williams, Dave Konopka,
Tyondai Braxton, John Stanier



**“I knew it would be good,
but I also knew we had to
get through a lot of bullshit.”**

- Ian Williams



PATHS OF RHYTHMS

BATTLES BEAT MACHINE JOHN STANIER GETS IN SYNC WITH LEGENDARY BAD BRAINS SINGER HR
WORDS PATRICK SISSON PHOTOS GRACE VILLAMIL

In their prime, Bad Brains was transcendent. In 1979, these four African-American punk pioneers from D.C. stormed the music world. They were Rastas capable of rattling your skull with intense rock, then seamlessly shifting gears into loping reggae rhythms and positive vibrations. The recently released concert DVD, *Bad Brains: Live at CBGB's 1982* (Music Video Distribution), hints at the band's true power. It's a tantalizing look at one of rock's most vibrant, and occasionally unstable, groups—one that wouldn't have existed without the passion and charisma of singer Paul "HR" Hudson.

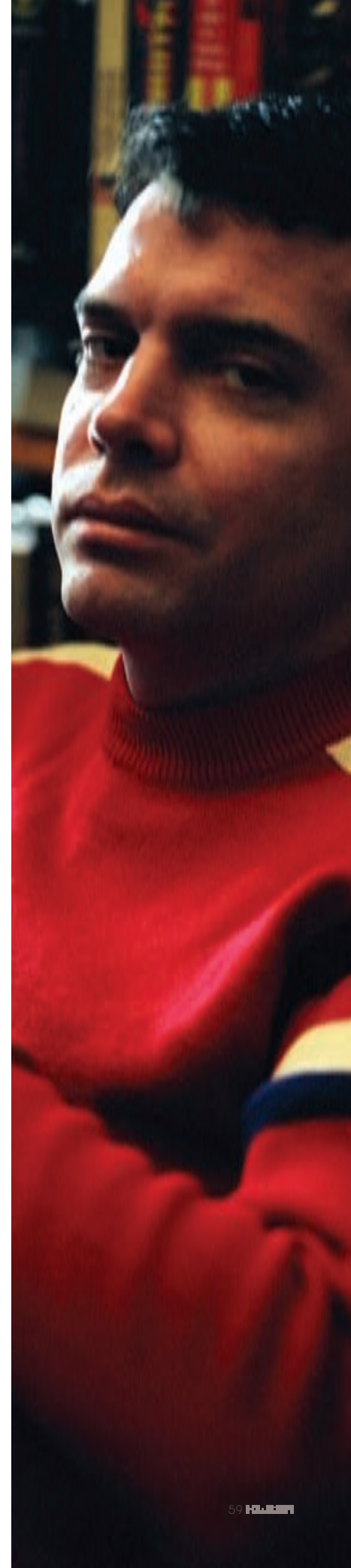
John Stanier—who saw Bad Brains' power firsthand at a Florida show in 1989—knows plenty about riveting performances. Originally known for drumming in innovative hard rock outfit Helmet, Stanier now bashes out lock-step grooves for Battles, an aural juggernaut that threads together experimental electronics, guitar riffs, and addictive, jazz-influenced rhythms. While the original lineup of Bad Brains worked on their new album in Baltimore and Stanier awaited the release of the debut Battles full-length in New York, the pair linked up on a telephone call to discuss brotherhood, hallowed punk moments, and the not-so-subtle influence of hip-hop grooves.

www.bttls.com, www.badbrains.com

XLR8R: Both of you played at New York club CBGB's back in the day. What was the significance of that venue?

HR: It was an open venue that gave us a way to channel, to release our talent, and I'm very grateful. We came and pulled it together, made it work, expanded our souls, as they say, and there was always a groove on. It was always a very educational experience. We kept the music as authentic as possible.

John Stanier: I agree. For me, it was really more about my old band Helmet. Our second or third show ever was at CB's. The sound system was amazing. It was definitely one of the best in the city. The people were nice and it was just a cool place to play and run into all your friends. The first time I ever played there, I was sitting behind the drums on a riser where your brother Earl from Bad Brains, The Ramones, Cro-Mags, and all the greats had sat. It was a temple in a weird way.





Bad Brains had an amazing drummer in Earl Hudson. What was it like playing with him, HR? And John, was he an influence?

JS: I grew up with that ROIR cassette [1982's *Bad Brains*]. The beat he's playing in "Pay to Cum" is legendary.

HR: Because Earl was my brother, my priority would always be to make sure he was able to deliver the sound he wanted. He interprets my style well. We have a groove together and it just clicks. It's like the water in the ocean and the waves. It just flows together.

JS: I don't have a brother, so I can only imagine it's a unique experience playing with an actual older brother. You can be really tight musically with people that you grew up with, but actually having your own sibling in a band, that's where it gets deep, far beyond technique. With the guys in Battles, it didn't click right away, but now it does. You pick up on little intricacies and innuendos. After four years, you can almost read their minds musically.

Both your groups fuse different ideas together. Bad Brains mixes hardcore and reggae, and Battles incorporates all these varied styles. How important is it for you guys to explore areas between genres to create your own sound?

JS: I don't feel like we go out of our way to throw everything into the pot. I think it just naturally happens that way. It's just four drastically different people coming from totally different backgrounds and different ages. It comes from the musical melting pot that is the band—it's not contrived or pre-meditated.

HR: With us, I would say it's a collaboration of ideas, sometimes more spontaneous and impromptu. And along with influences and our own ingenuity, the divine gospel redemptive character that God would inspire in us delivered some answers. At first, we did have a gift. We knew we had what it took to give the people what they wanted, where they would understand and actually sit through the show and feel like they got their money's

worth and even more. In the early days, we did need some guidance and good advice, and that was what we would get with producers like Ric (Ocasek) and Bunny Wailer. We would apply their techniques to our music and make it more universal and polished.

How important is playing live to you?

JS: I'm one of those musicians who prefers playing live. I love recording, because when you do a record, it's going to be around forever. But live is more fulfilling for me personally. Words can't even describe that.

HR: I feel like it's liberation time for mankind, because a lot of brothers have been playing punk rock music for a little while and they need to be heard. Look out, cool bands are needed. And the Brains, the original Brains, have something coming up really soon with Adam Yauch [from the Beastie Boys]. We finally got the tracks down; it's just a matter of time. You can look forward to some absolutely phenomenal live shows in the future. We're planning on going on more expeditions and campaigns, worldwide, national, and local. And it's 2007. The seventh year is always very lucky.

What did you think of the movie *Afro-Punk*?

HR: It had its moments of exhilaration. It's great for non-fiction. It gave people an idea of what was happening at those times. I feel like we've gotten a lot of respect. Well, one half of me says 'yes'; the other half says 'almost yes.' The public knows about us, but the intricate connections each member of the band wants to make haven't been made. There's another side to the story that hasn't been heard. That comes through the music. The music speaks for itself.

How influential is hip-hop to you? Do you feel a connection exists between punk and hip-hop?

JS: Growing up, the hip-hop that I really liked was early '80s and '90s hip-hop, and that was basically just samples of funk stuff. To me, hip-hop is basically funk on steroids. I think it has a huge influence on my playing. It's kind of a subliminal thing. And as for the similarities between punk and hip-hop, they are, at the end of the day, street music. It's very 'from the street' and talking about that kind of stuff. They're very, very similar.

HR: Definitely, yes. They do have these unexplainable, intriguing, subliminal positions that point out a certain truth, and one does get a rush. And musicians have been sharing their musical ideas since the bebop era. Hip-hop musicians, artists, MCs, DJs, all across the board, whether it be funk, reggae, hardcore, soul, rock, dancehall, reggaeton... Within all of these different categories, there exists the essence. There's no one speaking that language where the voice of the Almighty can't be heard. I predict there's going to be a baby boom on the way because of the music, yes sir. We have a track we're working on called "Hey Brother." It's like the cream of the crop. I would say there's definitely a big baby boom on the way.

JS: [Laughs] I think you're 100 percent right.



“There’s no one speaking that language where the voice of the Almighty can’t be heard.”

- HR



MY PET MONSTERS

ECLECTIC PARISIAN PRODUCER JOAKIM
EXORCISES HIS DEMONS, AND HAS FUN DOING IT.
WORDS PETER NICHOLSON
PHOTOS CAMILLE HENROT & CHRISTOPHE MCPHERSON PIEDAGNEL



“I’ve always been fascinated by monsters and the dark side.”

The last time I spoke to Joakim Bouaziz he was laughing, albeit a bit nervously. On the phone from the Parisian office of Tigersushi, the website and label he helped found, the lanky French producer/DJ/sometime-guitar player wondered aloud how his next gig would be received. “I played already a couple times [at Fabric], but as a DJ... and on New Year’s Eve, live, I’m really wondering,” he said with a chuckle.

“And between Erol Alkan and Justice? Phhhhh.” Letting out a particularly Gallic exhalation, he marveled at the situation he found himself in: playing one of his first gigs with his live band at London’s finest super-club on the biggest night of the year.

By all accounts, The Ectoplasmic Band acquitted itself admirably, not all that surprising considering the varied successes that have characterized its frontman’s career so far. Joakim unleashed his musical endowment as a classical pianist, studying under Paris’ Abdel Rahman El Bach. Circa 1994, he got sidetracked by labels like Mo’Wax and Warp, which led to a foray into DJing. Not satisfied with playing others’ music, he whipped up some demos for Gilb’r, the A&R man for French house-and-beyond label Versatile, *et voila!* The Joakim Lone Octet was born. He released *Tigersushi* in 1999

on the sub-label Future Talk, then adopted the name Tigersushi for a ground-breaking web portal and correspondingly adventurous record label that has released such titles as Mu’s *Afro Finger and Gel* and the *How to Kill the DJ* series.

Despite his first album’s solid reception by the likes of 4Hero, Joakim is quick to distinguish his current music from those early recordings, a merger of modal jazz and electronic sounds that he describes as “almost an exercise.” With 2003’s *Fantomes* (which spawned two hits by the unlikely names of “Are You Vegetarian?” and “Come Into My Kitchen”), Joakim began to explore a sound where angular guitars and twinkling synths fell under the sway of pop hooks and shifting towers of noise, with all elements sharing a sly grin.

Joakim's sense of playfulness continues on his latest, *Monsters & Silly Songs*. It boasts a cover of cartoon monsters drawn by the artist himself and an air that is both intense and swaggering. "Fun is not something I'm looking for—it's just that I'm like a child in the studio," explains the composer. "I feel lucky and I like using new stuff and playing guitar that I don't know how to play. On the other hand, I don't like 'funny' music. I'm very doubtful that 'funny' music can be good music. But there is something playful in the way that I do it and also, maybe I don't want to take myself too seriously, because that is a way to hide myself."

Monsters & Silly Songs was born partly of a desire to go where there is no place to hide: on stage. "I started to work on the album, really, on my own [but] I had decided that I wanted to be able to play live, which is an [important] parameter in doing music and composing. I didn't want to just stand behind a laptop, so I had to be able to adapt the songs to instruments that I could bring on stage."

To realize the songs, Joakim enlisted friends he met through his work with Tigersushi, and together they made good use of his newly built studio. "Before I had a 10-meter-square bedroom studio [but] I really learned a lot working with [Tigersushi bands] Poni Hoax and Panico. Before, I was really a child of the sampler and the computer."

The result is an expressive album that sways from the haunted, horror-movie strings and bass-drum plod of "Sleep in a Hollow Tree" to the glittering loops and ranting guitars of "Wish You Were Gone" (which opens Cut Copy's *FabricLive 29* mix to devastating effect) to the contemplative, haunting, almost Harold Budd-esque piano of "Peter Pan Over the Bronx." While some tracks reveal a raw, rock sound—obviously written to be banged out live—others explore dense textures and shifting arrangements that reach back to Joakim's roots in classical music. "What remains of [that] period is a sense of possibilities and complexity that goes much further than what you think," he explains, while saying that he never misses the "unbearable" stress of performing solo.

It seems Joakim has found his place in music—or, more accurately, carved one out for himself. (It certainly is hard to imagine an album of classical piano with a cover like *Monsters & Silly Songs*.) But it's clear that this new place is no less full of possibilities.

"I've always been fascinated by monsters and the dark side. I've drawn monsters since I was young," muses Joakim about his choice of cover art. "The songs and the monsters, they are the two opposite sides of what influenced me for this record: On one side you have the pop songs [and] songwriting, and on the other side you have noise music. On one hand you have Scott Walker and, I don't know, The Beatles, and on the other one you have Sunn O))) and Sonic Youth. Also, the monsters are interesting because they are exorcising unconscious collective fears. I think songs, in a way, have the same function in the collective unconscious—you can express things in songs that you couldn't express normally."

Joakim's *Monsters & Silly Songs* is out now on !K7.
www.tigersushi.com, www.k7.com



STAGE FRIGHT Each evolution of Joakim's career entails new forms of performance anxiety.

Joakim has spent more than his fair share of time on stage, and some moments in the spotlight have been more enjoyable than others. "It was always solo and it was really a nightmare," he says of his days as a classical pianist. "The amount of stress for me was unbearable—it's just a cup of tea DJing compared to that."

Still, selecting records to rock a party is not without its perils and pratfalls. "I [began] just playing rare tracks that I like and now I

understand that it's not enough," he says. "Now I try to be in between—giving the people maybe not what they want, but what they need, and then bringing them to what I want. Once you get the connection, you can really play what you feel."

Though he still DJs, Joakim's current love is playing with his band, an evolution of early laptop and synth sets he performed, such as one in which he scored a 1928 French version of *The Fall of the House of Usher*. "DJing and

playing live with a band is very different. It's much more physical when I play with a band, and it hurts the ears more also," he chuckles.

Joakim and The Ectoplasmic Band often get booked at clubs where the crowd only expects DJs. "We played at Panoramabar in Berlin at four in the morning and it was really freaky," Joakim. "But it was cool. It can be hard—sometimes people just want the beat. It depends on what drugs they took, how drunk they are..."



ENGLISH ROSE

TRACEY THORN DITCHES DOWNTEMPO DIRGES FOR DISCO TORCH SONGS, WITH SOME HELP FROM EWAN PEARSON.
WORDS DAVID HEMINGWAY PHOTOS VALERIE PHILLIPS

Tracey Thorn released a solo album once before. But while 1982's *A Distant Shore* has recently been dubbed "the greatest album you have never heard," you're probably more familiar with the singer from her collaboration with Massive Attack and long-running stint in Everything But The Girl, a duo formed with partner Ben Watt.

Though initially taking their cues from jazz and folk, EBTG quickly absorbed influences from house, drum & bass, and techno, eventually becoming downtempo stalwarts in the 1990s. Their longevity was largely due to their versatility—EBTG tracks worked on the dancefloor (thanks to remixes by Todd Terry, Adam F, and Kenny Dope), were the perfect soundtrack to the comedown on the car ride home, and could be played on adult contemporary radio. Unlike other dance music divas, obscured by effects and remix tricks, Thorn's penetrating voice—tender, mournful, but strong—and longing lyrics have always been the driving force of every track she's involved with.

STEPPING OUT

Eventually, Thorn relinquished pop music for motherhood, and had little intention of stepping back into the singing game. But a collaboration with Tiefschwarz ("Damage," from their *Eat Books* record) and a query from Pet Shop Boy Neil Tennant as to why she wasn't singing any more changed her mind. Last year, she started work on her first solo record in two and a half decades.

Thorn was adamant that *Out of the Woods* be her own effort, not another Everything But The Girl album. "There are loads of reasons," she explains. "Ben [Watt] is so busy with DJing and running [house label] Buzzin' Fly. He is more motivated than me and has more time to spend concentrating on music, so I feared that he would 'take over' and it would become his project, though I don't mean that in a nasty way. I'd got into the habit of being a bit lazy when I was working with Ben and I wanted to set myself more of a challenge, see if I could do it by myself. Living and working together is not easy and

now we have three kids, too. I was worried when there was gonna be time for us to be just 'us,' not 'Mum and Dad' or 'EBTG.' Something had to give."

WORKING GIRL

Thorn tapped out emails to a series of potential collaborators—including Darkmountaingroup's Alex Santos, Vector Lovers' Martin Wheeler, and Furry Phreaks' Charles Webster—asking if they'd be interested. Everyone said yes. Her main collaborator turned out to be Ewan Pearson. "I was drawn to him because of his good looks and charm plus his fabulously gay record collection which, like mine, is stuffed full of Dusty Springfield, Rufus Wainwright, and the Pet Shop Boys," says Thorn.

"Once we started working together, I realized Ewan was very versatile, very open-minded, and keen to try new things all the time," she continues. "He was very supportive of the idea that it should be my record. He kept encouraging me to play things myself



“I was drawn to him because of his good looks and charm plus his fabulously gay record collection.”
- Tracey Thorn

and bring myself to the fore. He also made sure there was cake provided at some point in the afternoon and put a glass of wine in my hand as the evening approached.

Thorn also recorded two tracks with Cagedbaby's Tom Gandey, whose own deconstruction of '80s pop, *Will See You Now* (Southern Fried), has drawn comparisons to Depeche Mode, Talking Heads, and Prince.

“Tom was amazing to collaborate with and so generous with his ideas,” enthuses Thorn. “One day I was down at his studio, and as I was leaving he said, ‘Oh, here, take this CD; it’s got a few new tracks I’ve been working on. See if there’s anything you like.’ When I got home, I found there were around 20 tracks on it. He has no concept of hoarding his best ideas.”

“I was honored to work with Tracey,” reciprocates Gandey. “EBTG were a massive inspiration on me and my friends. I remember sitting in my car at the top of a hill listening to *Walking Wounded* over and over again thinking ‘This is what I want to do.’”

EMOTION AND LIGHT

Despite the involvement of notable dance music producers, *Out of the Woods* isn't *exactly* a dance album. (Thorn uses the idiom “bedsit disco torch songs” to describe its tracks.) It exists on the periphery, skirting the edges of the dancefloor and only occasionally jumping right in. Titles like “Raise the Roof” and “Hands Up to the Ceiling” might seem like obvious signifiers for

hot disco action but turn out to be decoys. The former gurgles pleasantly rather than incessantly raving; the latter is a muted and somber elegy to a record collection. Thorn covers Arthur Russell's cosmic disco masterpiece “Get Around to It” with aplomb, harnessing sax blurts from The Rapture's Gabe Andruzzi, but the highlight is “It's All True,” which resuscitates the vibe of '80s New York via Berlin and West London.

“It's All True” was co-written by Darshan Jesrani of Metro Area, whose self-titled 2002 album was a big influence on Thorn. By happy accident, Jesrani happened to be staying at the Berlin home of Klas Lindblad (a.k.a. Sasse) when Ewan Pearson came by with a synth and they “all got down to making a track.” Via email from New York, Jesrani describes the collaboration process as: “One, make a track. Two, forget about it. Three, be surprised and delighted when it comes back to you with a hot lead vocal that sews it all up.”

“There was a general vibe I had in mind while making the track,” explains Jesrani, “It was sort of early/mid-'80s New York club music: funky but a little cold, and as emotional as the awful production allowed it to be—which resulted in a sweet but alienated feeling. The sound is about heavy dance rhythms juxtaposed with a moody, sort of new-wave aesthetic. Framing it that way makes the fact that Tracey sang on it even more appropriate and serendipitous. On the other hand, her vocals are more lush and are good and in tune, which probably disqualifies it

from being a genuine mid-'80s NY club record.”

Thorn also admits to being influenced by the solo work of former Moloko songstress Róisín Murphy. “I did really like the album Róisín did with Matthew Herbert a year or so ago,” says Thorn. “I kept thinking how much ‘light’ there was in it, both in the sense of being ‘bright’ and also ‘not heavy.’ I think that quality became something I was keen to capture [on my album]. There are images of light throughout the lyrics, and even the title, *Out of the Woods*, refers to this.”

PUSHING ON

This lightness is a change from the mournful songs Thorn penned in the past; tracks like apology anthem “Wrong” and the heartstring-tugging “Walking Wounded,” for instance. But Thorn seems more unburdened now (as least as much as she'll ever be), and quite proud to still be relevant nearly 20 years later.

“I feel like something of a survivor really,” she declares. “I can't really think of many people who were my contemporaries when I started who are still making music at all. I feel like I've witnessed at least two or three generational clear-outs! It makes me feel kind of old but also a bit untouchable—like I'm not really competing against the people who are making music now because I'm already established as who I am. That's quite a good feeling.”

Out of the Woods is out now on Virgin Records.
www.myspace.com/traceythorn

WOODS MAN

Producer Ewan Pearson talks about the making of *Out of the Woods*.
Words David Hemingway Photo Ragnar Schmuck

What were your thoughts on Everything But The Girl?

My favorite EBTG record was actually their cover of Rod Stewart's “I Don't Wanna Talk About It.” I also loved the *Walking Wounded* LP and the Massive Attack collaborations, of course. I think that the lyric to “Protection” is one of the most incredible pieces of writing in pop ever. People always talk about how great Tracey's voice is but consistently underestimate what a brilliant writer she is.

How do you feel about Tracey now?

Oh, I'm going to sound gushy and ludicrous. I'm just really lucky to have worked with someone who is as lovely as they are extremely talented. It was enormous fun from start to finish.

Do you take a vision of how you want the album to sound to the recording process?

The most important thing is to listen to what the artist wants to do and the ideas they have, because that's what is going to make me decide whether I'm even the right person for the job before we start. And it's from these discussions that I start to get ideas about what I might bring to things. I got held up a bit doing The Rapture, so we spent a long time talking before we really got stuck in, and that was quite valuable.

Describe the process of working with Tracey.

A lot of iChatting, a lot of talking about books, records, celebrity trivia, and making crap puns—some hanging out, drinking gin, and eating cake. I think for a while she thought I was a feckless bullshitter that just talked a good game. I got nervous and procrastinated a lot and then came up with most of my work in brief, sudden flurries of activity, throwing

ideas out right at the last minute. Once we got cracking, the studio sessions were really good fun. When everyone's comfortable and enjoying themselves, that's the best bit, and they go far too quickly.

And then I spent ages editing and adding and doing the finishing touches. I tried to put off the mixing dates and drove everybody mad. I'm either pontificating about things in abstract and putting off actually starting, or I'm getting really psychotically obsessive for 16 hours a day and running myself into the ground. There's no halfway.

Is there a record that influenced how you wanted *Out of the Woods* to sound?

There's not one, really, and we certainly didn't follow a template. When we first met, we quickly realized that we had so many records that we loved in common: Nico, The Blue Nile, Pet Shop Boys, Richard and Linda Thompson, Blossom Dearie, Arthur Russell, Feist, Electribe 101, Scritti Politti. I was only really clear about one thing in my mind: that I didn't want any electro-house in there at all. The dance tracks we did are about that post-disco/pre-house hinterland of the mid-'80s—all Shep Pettibone, Larry Levan.

Tell me about the “mum test.”

Well, my mum is a very good judge of whether something is good or not, and quite forthright in her opinions. I remember taking her the finished Rapture album and the Tracey demos, which were rough as anything. A couple of weeks later she rang me and said that, although she liked the Rapture album, the Tracey stuff was all she was listening to and I had “better not fuck it up.”





KEEPING TRACK

Tracey Thorn and Ewan Pearson discuss their favorite tracks from *Out of the Woods*.

Tracey Thorn

"Here It Comes Again"

This was one of the first tracks I did for the album. I'd hired a harmonium [a musical instrument similar to a pipe organ] for the first day of recording with Ewan and before we did anything else I said "I just wanna stick down a demo of a new song I've written." I sat down at the harmonium and played it through once, then quickly did the vocal. We listened back to it later on and realized that it was just right as it was. We added the strings later but that was it; we never fiddled with the vocal or harmonium part again.

"A-Z"

A-Z was inspired by reading an article in the paper about how gay teenagers at school still suffer horrendous bullying. I imagined a character going through this and then dreaming of escaping to London, which always was, and remains, my slightly idealized city location where everyone is accepted, welcomed, and allowed to be themselves. The song is also something of a homage to Bronski Beat's "Smalltown Boy."

"Hands Up to the Ceiling"

This song is about me trying to capture the feeling I needed in order to make this record. I'm looking back at some of the people who inspired me back when I was starting (Siouxsie Sioux, Terry Hall, Edwyn Collins) and talking about how I lost some of that passion in the last few years. I felt like if I was gonna do this record at all, I had to recapture that absolute, hands-up-to-the-ceiling euphoria that I used to get from music. Ewan always loved the fact that the title of the song would make people think it was gonna be a complete floor-filler and then it's this slightly sad acoustic ballad.

Ewan Pearson

"Falling Off a Log"

This is a track that I wasn't initially working on but Tracey wasn't really happy with the version she had. The only thing she liked was the string arrangement, so I basically had some finished strings and a demo vocal and that was it. It was getting quite late in the process and we were due to mix in four days or something, and I didn't really have an idea how to finish it. Late at night, with Tracey on iChat in London, I just started doing some drums and a bassline and half an hour later it was there, this kind of slow house thing, a bit like Electribe 101's "Tell Me When the Fever Ended." We both got really excited, but it still wasn't finished. So I had my pal in Partial Arts, Al Usher, come up with some more parts while I was mixing the rest of the record.

"Nowhere Near This"

This was produced by Charles Webster—he's done a really lovely flugelhorn and flute arrangement—and I just recorded the vocal and piano at one of our sessions. I think it's a stunning song, a difficult song about being a mum which isn't pat and doesn't leave you with any easy conclusions. Recording it was very intense and I was actually biting my lip 'cause tears were welling up as Tracey sang it.

"It's All True"

Darshan, Sasse, and I had written the music in Berlin a year before Tracey came to me. When she mentioned really liking Metro Area I knew I had to send her the track, and she wrote a really fantastic top-line for it. We added strings from some friends in New York and that was it. It's a real Paradise Garage, mid-'80s dance track—really joyous.



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May 16 Austin, TX - Emos Lounge
May 17 Albuquerque, NM - Launchpad
May 18 Tucson, AZ - Club Congress
May 19 Flagstaff, AZ - Orpheum
May 20 Pomona, CA - Glasshouse
May 22 San Diego, CA - Belly Up
May 23 Los Angeles, CA - Troubadour
May 24 San Luis Obispo, CA - Downtown Brew
May 25 San Francisco, CA - Slims
May 26 Reno, NV - New Oasis
May 29 Eugene, OR - Wow Hall
May 30 Portland, OR - Hawthorne Theatre
May 31 Seattle, WA - Vera Project
Jun 01 Bellingham, WA - Night Light

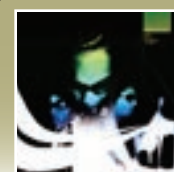
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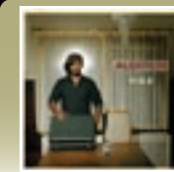


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WELCOME BACK TO DETROIT

AFTER A TRAGIC YEAR, PHAT KAT, BLACK MILK, AND GUILTY SIMPSON GET MOTOR CITY HIP-HOP RUNNING AGAIN.

WORDS JESSE SERWER PHOTOS DOUG COOMBE

2006 was a horrible year for hip-hop artists in Detroit. In February, producer James “Jay Dee” Yancey (a.k.a. J Dilla) lost his battle with lupus just days after releasing the acclaimed *Donuts*. Two months later, Proof of D12 was killed at the infamous CCC Club on 8 Mile Road. While hip-hop has grown accustomed to sudden death, Dilla and Proof were the Kevin Bacons of Detroit rap: the guys who connected all of its varied cliques and cultures, the missing link between Waajeed and Platinum Pied Pipers and Trick Trick and the Goon Squad.

But the D is one resilient place. Even as the city itself continues to withstand massive layoffs and economic

divestment, Detroit hip-hop has been a sort of oasis from industry wackness, a place where individuality is still king, and hip-hop still means gritty and dirty *and* smooth and soulful—not one or the other. And it’s definitely on in ‘07—“the year of the MC,” as local rhyme vet Phat Kat is calling it. In Phat Kat’s *Carte Blanche* (Look Records), Black Milk’s *Popular Demand* (Fat Beats), and as many as three upcoming LPs from Guilty Simpson, three of Dilla’s closest associates are dropping a coordinated set of bombs, guesting on each other’s records and carrying on the tradition of their deceased associates. To quote the late, great Dilla, “Welcome to the D, baby. It’s all live down here.”



Detroit hip-hoppers (from left) Guilty Simpson, Phat Kat, and Black Milk



“I’m like a
caveman
 with this
analog shit.”
 - Black Milk



“They’re really
sleeping
 on
Detroit.”
 - Phat Kat

BLACK MILK

At 23, Curtis “Black Milk” Cross is about a decade younger than Phat Kat, Guilty Simpson, and other close associates like Slum Village’s T3, but Detroit’s youngest in charge is definitely an old soul.

“I’m like a caveman with this analog shit,” the producer/MC explains when I reach him at The Record Collector, a used vinyl shop in Ferndale, a northern suburb of Detroit. “My hangouts are the record store and the fuckin’ studio. All I do is this, hit up a couple tittie bars, and it’s back to the lab.”

That regimen has clearly paid off. Not only has Milk become the Detroit underground’s go-to producer since Jay Dee passed, but he’s lacing high-profile national projects like Pharoahe Monch’s *Desire*. Up next, he’s producing the entirety of *Caltoit*, a collaboration with new Aftermath signee Bishop Lamont, and the bulk of Guilty Simpson’s and Sean Price’s upcoming tag-team LP. Having proven his mic skills are no joke on 2005’s *Sound of the City* and the newly released *Popular Demand*, Milk’s been garnering acclaim as an MC as well.

“I wasn’t a guy who did beats first and one day decided I want to start rapping—I was rhyming before beats,” says Milk, who was one half of Ten Speed and Brown Shoe, an MC duo featured on Slum Village’s *Dirty District* mixtape. It was beats that gained him his industry entry pass, though, when a cousin who was a roadie for Slum Village placed a beat tape in T3’s and Baatin’s hands.

“When Slum came back from tour, they picked a couple tracks for their *Trinity* album,” Milk recalls. Clicking in the studio with another youthful Slum-affiliated producer, Young RJ, the two dubbed themselves BR Gunna, producing the entirety of Slum Village’s self-titled 2005 LP and rapping on the never-released BR Gunna LP with Fat Ray before venturing out on his own with *Sound of the City*.

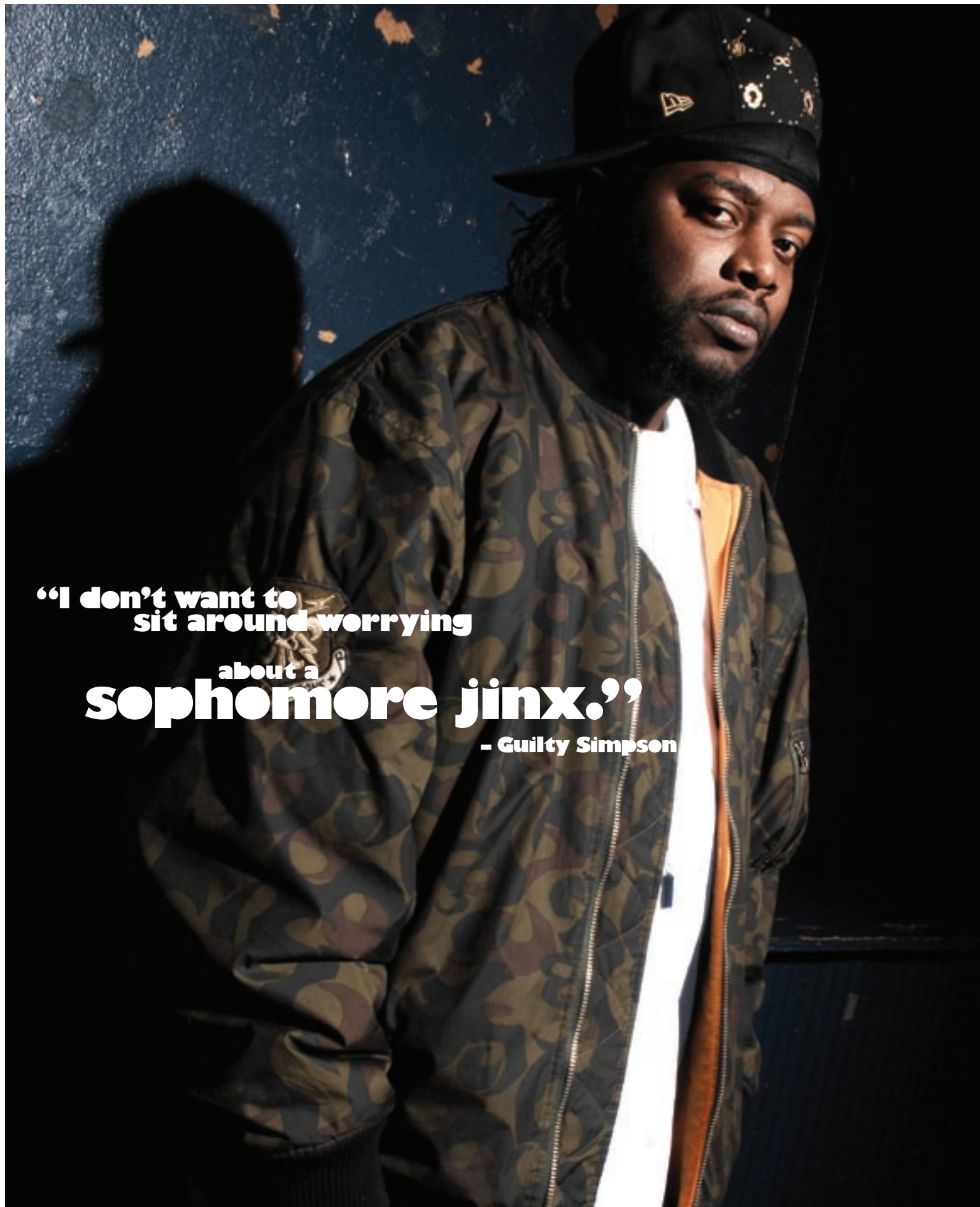
While *Popular Demand* builds upon the crisp, sample-driven soul sound Milk has quickly become known for, his next release will be on an entirely different level, he says, citing influences like Yes, Tomita, and Mike Oldfield’s *Tubular Bells*. “I didn’t want to change my sound up too fast, with people just getting familiar with my music,” Milk explains. “So (for *Popular Demand*) I said I’m gonna hold back and do one more in the same light of what people know me for.”

www.myspace.com/blackmk, www.fatbeats.com

PHAT KAT

“2006 was just surreal, like there was a black cloud over that whole year,” says Phat Kat (a.k.a. Ronnie Cash). “Either it was gonna make you stronger, or you was weak and gonna succumb. I just took all the negative and focused that into something good.”

The result is *Carte Blanche*, the second LP from the gruff-voiced East Side native behind such D-Town classics as 2000’s “Dedication



“I don’t want to sit around worrying about a sophomore jinx.”
— Guilty Simpson

to the Suckers” and Slum Village’s “Fat Cat Song.” The 14-track LP was assembled with a committee of Detroit-only producers: Black Milk, Young RJ, Nick Speed, and, of course, J Dilla, who stacked up his long-time partner-in-crime’s plate with beats during a European tour just months before his passing (five Dilla tracks made the album). Every guest on *Carte Blanche* (with the exception of former Aftermath songstress Truth Hurts) hails from Motown as well, giving the album a community-showcase vibe reminiscent of Slum’s *Dirty District* and Dilla’s *Welcome 2 Detroit*.

“I feel the cats I roll with is just as hot, or hotter, than some of the biggest [people] out there,” Phat Kat says. “I want to show the world they’re really sleeping on Detroit.”

Kat is definitely the star of the show, however, playing up the underdog role and schooling the Detroit rap-ignorant on “True Story, Pt. 2,” preaching street justice on “Cold Steel,” and generally spitting with the hunger of a freshman. Of course, the opposite is true: Before Slum Village or Eminem, it was Phat Kat, along with Dilla, who put the D on the rap map as the short-lived duo 1st Down, of mid-’90s Payday Records fame. But, despite an ultimately unfruitful solo deal with Virgin Records U.K. and his remarkably consistent 2004 debut LP, *The Undeniable*, Kat somehow remains overlooked, even in Detroit.

Despite the unlikely move to San Francisco’s Look Records, *Carte Blanche* looks like the album to finally bust him out of that ghetto and onto the same pedestal as Detroit lyricists like Royce Da 5’9, Eminem, Proof, and Elzhi. “Look sees the vision more,” he states confidently.

Clearly, that vision also involves preserving the legacy of a friend whom Phat Kat still refers to in present tense. “I’m gonna always have Dilla beats on my albums,” he says. “We got stuff up our sleeves for years to come.”

www.ronniecash.com, www.lookrecords.com

GUILTY SIMPSON

Dilla confidant Karriem Riggins could have scored any rapper in the world to spit on “Jungle Love,” the last unfinished track on Dilla’s *The Shining*. But he called Guilty Simpson.

“Guilty was one of Jay’s favorite rappers,” Riggins says of the decision to employ Simpson, a relative unknown outside of Detroit at the time. (L.A.’s MED had previously recorded the song’s other verse with Dilla before his death). “Guilty’s one of my favorite MCs,” Riggins explains. “He spits so hard.”

While the occasion was bittersweet, Guilty’s turns on *The Shining* gave the 31-year-old MC the momentum to move from a local figure (best known as part of the 12-man Almighty Dreadnaughtz crew) to a nationally known entity signed to both Stones Throw Records and Denaun Porter’s Interscope-affiliated Runyon Ave. label. With guest spots

like the Dilla-produced “Clap Your Hands” and “Take Notice” (off the *Chrome Children* compilation and the refurbished *Ruff Draft* EP, respectively), Dabrye’s “Special” (off the *2/3* album), and “Sound the Alarm,” the lead single from Black Milk’s *Popular Demand*, adding to his buzz, Guilty plans to release two LPs through Stones Throw within a year’s time, along with a tag-team LP with Sean Price for Duck Down Records.

“I want to make sure I make my mark while I’m in this element,” explains the MC—whose real last name is Simpson—of the planned one-two punch for Stones Throw. “I don’t want to sit around worrying about a sophomore jinx.”

While album titles are still up in the air, Guilty is considering calling the first one *Beast*, a somewhat apt word to describe his simultaneously laid-back and forceful rhyme style. In addition to beats from Denaun Porter (who’s executive-producing both albums), Black Milk, Young RJ, Madlib, and Jake One, both will contain traces of *The Verdict*, a never-completed EP that Dilla was producing for Guilty before relocating to California for health reasons.

“I think it’s important for me to be in the same element I was in when I recorded with him,” Guilty says. “I broke up the EP so both records can represent that time-frame.”

www.myspace.com/guultysimpson, www.stonesthrow.com

THE D’S NUTS!!!

Black Milk and Phat Kat break down Detroit’s next generation.

NAMETAG

Appears on: Black Milk’s “Say Something”

Black Milk: “Nametag’s got punchlines, metaphors all day. He’s like a young Elzhi with the wordplay. When he gets to that age, I can’t imagine how he’s gonna spit. He’s not signed yet, but I’m gonna get these beats under him and we’ll get it crackin’!”

NICK SPEED

Appears on: Phat Kat’s “Vessels” and “Nightmare”, 50 Cent’s “What If”

Phat Kat: “That’s his real name, too, Nicholas Speed. It sounds like a superhero or something. Cats in Detroit slept on this dude... now he’s signed to G-Unit, producing on Lloyd Banks’ and 50’s albums.”

FAT RAY

Appears on: Black Milk’s “Sound of the City”, Phat Kat’s “Hard Enuff”

Black Milk: “That’s what I’m doing right now, working on Fat Ray’s project. His voice is on some Biggie Smalls shit—he don’t have to say nothing fresh because his voice is already there, but he’s nasty on the rhymes.”

ILLA J

Appears on: The video for J Dilla’s “Won’t Do”

Phat Kat: “Dilla’s little brother, John, just started making beats after Dilla passed. He got some heat. We are talking about putting together a group called 2nd Down. They look so much alike, they even talk alike—it’s crazy!”



HAZY SHADES

EXPLOSIONS IN THE SKY FLICKERS AND FLARES ITS WAY THROUGH ANOTHER OCHRE-TINGED GUITAR OPUS.

WORDS TONY WARE PHOTOS COURTNEY CHAVANELL

Fans—whether of sports or music—say a lot of things, not all of them nice. They say the second title is the toughest, that the hardest thing is a repeat. And they repeat these axioms 'til they hammer harder and heavier than any linebacker.

Some teams flare up and out, achieving a pyrrhic victory. Then there are countless tales of bands and ballplayers sacked just short of expectations, no matter how many two-a-days they ran.

There are no such tales starring Explosions in the Sky.— Since forming in the summer of 1999—to fireworks blasting, both literal and musical—the Austin, TX quartet has accrued increasing acclaim for their cathartic instrumental rock, which lies somewhere between the epic shoegaze soundscapes of Mogwai and the dirgy *sturm und drang* of Metallica. *All of a Sudden I Miss Everyone*, their fourth album (amid several soundtracks and an EP), finds the band again doing what it does best: personalizing melancholy, and soundtracking the 'almost,' the 'yet,' and the 'what might be.' *All of a Sudden I Miss Everyone* is the state championship for this year's senior class of transcendent indie rockers, cementing Explosions as anything but the underdogs.

A SOUND TRACK

"There haven't been any catastrophic deaths among our family or friends in the last few years," assures drummer Chris Hrasky by phone, when asked about the poignant title of the record. "But, when thinking of writing the album and what it should sound like, a person lost and isolated with memories swirling around them was the basic idea. All of a sudden a person realizes, 'Jesus, where did the people go I'm supposedly close to?' For me it's meaningful because there are friends I lost touch with and I'm not as close with family as I'd like to be."

The band members themselves have been neither disassociated nor dormant in the interim since 2003's *The Earth Is Not a Cold Dead Place*. In 2004, the group—whose music was already often described as "filmic"—scored the high-school football drama *Friday Night Lights*, the movie adaptation of Buzz Bissinger's book chronicling the failed



“I didn’t want the record to sound shiny.

I wanted it dusty and ragged.”

- Chris Hrasky



1988 attempt of the Permian Panthers to win the state championship. The Panthers hailed from Odessa, TX, near Midland, where Explosions’ three guitarists grew up. (Hrasky is from Rockford, IL, and connected with the guitarists through a flyer in a record store.)

The *Friday Night Lights* score (which has been partially reprised in episodes of the NBC TV series) exemplifies Explosions in the Sky’s command of wordless narrative. The silvery guitar palpitations of Munaf Rayani (“anthemic,” assigns Hrasky), Mark Smith (“melodic”), and Michael James (“all-around anything”) would be plaintive, were it not for the drums coming in so steady as to not give up. The musical themes don’t instruct you to feel sorry for the town or root for the kids; they just cue the possibilities.

Several of the non-musical influences this foursome has in common also fit this profile. Whether it’s the Wes Anderson film *Bottle*

Rocket or Cormac McCarthy’s novel *The Road*, Explosions in the Sky is drawn to allegories of marshalling faith, to works of gentle sadness that contain occasionally violent flares.

GOLDEN BROWN

On *All of a Sudden*, there are some notable new emulsifiers streaking the band’s progressive arcs. Produced in a rural setting (with John Congleton), Explosions has finally achieved the “live, blistering sound” toward which the band had been striving. The album also sees the group introducing instrumental aphorisms into more “ashen” landscapes. “I use color to describe the sound I’m going for,” reveals Hrasky. “I told the engineer I wanted the record to sound ‘brown,’ though at first no one understood what I meant.”

Hrasky cites Weezer’s *Pinkerton* as an archetype, and not just because the album’s cover is brownish. Hrasky thinks it sounds like

a frustrated, exaggerated live set. The boxy drums and raked emotions speak to Explosions in the Sky’s instrumentals, which were recorded directly, with few overdubs, to analog tape for the first time (a brownish coincidence there).

“I like records that don’t feel dirty in terms of noise, but it sounds like they’re made by people,” muses Hrasky. “You can hear fingers on the strings, things like that. I didn’t want the record to sound shiny. I wanted it dusty and ragged, and I like to think it turned out that way.

“The last record I liked, but... there was a weird sort of distance in the recording,” Hrasky continues. “We’re happy with it but maybe happier with this one. It sounds like four guys with huge amps and drums banging away in a room and that’s how we wanted this record—a lot more aggressive, I guess.”

As if borne from a brownout, the dynamics of Explosions in the Sky flicker and spurt from a

bristling current choked with potential. The tones are more cloistered, but no less capable of leaping from corpuscular and contemplative to a mercurial deluge. With its gripping grit, *All of a Sudden* is less akin to Godspeed You! Black Emperor; it’s more like the stampeding parts of *Raiders of the Lost Ark* soundtrack meeting up with Metallica’s arid riffs on *...And Justice For All*, with a hint of Slint in its freshly caked clusters. Don’t expect violins or blitzkrieg riffs; Explosions may use tools similar to other bands, but they use them to transcribe their own incandescent vistas.

LONG JOURNEY HOME

As a complement, a limited-edition two-CD version of *All of a Sudden* comes packaged with a free track-for-track remix album, featuring contributions from Four Tet, Eluvium, and Adem, among others. These remixers take seriously the ghosts hinted at in the album’s six songs and their titles (“The Birth

and Death of the Day,” “It’s Natural to Be Afraid,” “Catastrophe and the Cure”). Cascades of hums and crackles submerge fret flurries, adding some grey snow to the oxidized sandstorm.

“Mountains [who remixed ‘What Do You Go Home To?’] gave the track this really lovely and dark spaciousness, letting the piano melodies develop over a far longer time than we would ever dare,” surveys Mark Smith by email. “Plus they added this short but sweet sample of what sounds like someone sweeping a porch as children play nearby, which is about as thematically perfect as a sample can be for that song. Jesu’s version of ‘The Birth and Death of the Day’ has this swirling repetition that gives the song a trancelike quality, and creates entirely new melodies from our melodies. I love to see which parts/melodies/moods the remixers chose to emphasize.”

While initially hesitant to have remixes—eyeing them as filler—Explosions feels energized by care

and thought poured into these new versions of their beloved tracks. It’s another example of this band’s willingness to fluidly adapt its game plan.

“On this album we may have had a general idea of what we wanted, but we didn’t set out with an idea of where we were heading in the end,” says Hrasky. “I like the songs where there is a gentle wave goodbye. I think I like that more than just bombs blowing up. Our songs have no advice, no lesson to nail home hard. But I hope people have some sort of personal attachment to the music... It certainly consumes us.”

Explosions in the Sky’s *All of a Sudden I Miss Everyone* is out now on Temporary Residence. www.explosionsinthesky.com, www.temporaryresidence.com





Explosions in the Sky:
Michael James, Chris Hrasky,
Munaf Rayani, Mark Smith

SCORE BOARD

Explosions in the Sky describes the movies they would most like to soundtrack.

GUITARIST MICHAEL JAMES

"I'm gonna say a Terrence Malick picture also, but it would be his film adaptation of *The Executioner's Song* by Norman Mailer. I think his directorial style could perfectly capture the power of that book, and I think our music would go well with the setting and atmosphere. And, as payment, Mr. Malick would have to attend one of our shows."

DRUMMER CHRIS HRASKY

"I would like us to score a Terrence Malick movie that doesn't exist. It would flow and have a similar tone to all of his other movies, but it would take place in sprawling suburbia: Schaumburg, IL circa 1997. Not sure what the story would be, but I would like a scene with a bird flying around inside a Best Buy. As far as recording, I would like us to sit down to a late-night dinner with [Malick] every night in the studio and then record until dawn."

GUITARIST MUNAF RAYANI

"At the risk of sounding ridiculous, I think maybe I would like to score a funeral. Now, while I understand that death is not such a joyous topic, I wouldn't want to approach it with a morbid frame of mind; rather, with a soft, gentle, embracing tone. In the cycle of life, we will all check out one day, and I hope that when I go, it is with a kind sound."

GUITARIST MARK SMITH

"The film *Koyaanisqatsi* once blew me away and I've always felt like we could make a score similar in scope and technique. I'm not sure about the imaginary movie's theme (A world absent of humans? A triumphant rejoicing of the human spirit? A celebration of the animal?), but I'd like to think we could match the images. I think it would be interesting trying to make unbroken, long-form music that doesn't necessarily conform to our familiar song structures. Available only in IMAX theaters and virtual-reality helmets."

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2010 FRESH

INDIE RAP'S PARTY MONSTERS EXPLAIN HOW TO ROCK ON A DIME.

Following in the footsteps of 2 Live Crew and JJ Fad, Gold Chains and Gravy Train!!!, Snap and Lil Jon, a new club rap canon emerges, guided by the same bass-inundated party-and-bullshit ethos, but availed of above-average vocabularies and high-speed internet connections. Meet Philly's off-the-cuff MC Pase Rock, who many know through frequent appearances with Spank Rock and potty-mouthed partner-in-rhyme Amanda Blank. Brooklyn's Bunny Rabbit and Black Cracker are the sonic incarnation of Williamsburg attitude with their cynical wordplay and sinister beats. Yelle and beat-maker Grand Marnier are France's cotton-candy take on the genre, while Ed Banger's Uffie (and her producer boyfriend Peadz) fuse Miami bass to the dirty sounds of French electro. Tampa's Yo Majesty unwittingly stumbled into fast tempos by way of England's David Alexander, who gave them free beats. Meanwhile, in the Midwest, '90s dance informs the unhinged cadences of 19-year-old Milwaukee native Juiceboxxx and Chicago juke—the new incarnation of ghetto house—inspires internet phenom Kid Sister. This is the new era of indie rap, a generation that weighs authenticity against individuality, treats charisma as currency, and argues that sometimes style *is* substance. *Stacey Dugan*



PHOTO ANDREAS LARSSON

KID SISTER

What's your sound?

My music style is a direct result of growing up biracial. For example, at times I think I sound really fun and effervescent but there's always a hint of, "Aw heeeell naw, I know that bitch didn't look at me crazy in my own house!" in there. Mhmm, you might get stole on.

Describe your look.

A fine balance between Baby Phat layaway items from Marshall's, Daffy's, and TJ Maxx, and free shit my man gives me.

Name one article of clothing you can't live without.

My single, solitary pair of Levis! I can't afford another pair. After that, I'd say my Barney's shopping bag/tote bag—it's a big cave! I've got lipsticks, cell phones, a stolen Kinko's employee card, and a big bottle of Frank's RedHot sauce in there right now.

Any on-stage fashion disasters?

I rocked my first big show last year traipsing the stage with my bright pink Hawaiian-print high-leg panties showing out the back of my jeans. Everybody saw them—I think they were briefs. I threw those jeans away the other day.

Kid Sister's full-length, *KoKo B. Ware*, will be out later this year. www.myspace.com/kidsister

YO MAJESTY

What's your sound?

Shunda K: Universal-woman-type shit.

Describe your look.

SK: Plain Jane: wife-beaters and jeans.

JB: Retro and punk. If I really had money, that's how I'd roll.

Shon B: I'm lovable, but not to be fucked with 'cause I don't fuck wit nobody.

Name one article of clothing you can't live without.

SK: Wife-beaters and boxers. Sport bras too.

JB: Fucking boxers 'cause everything else sticks in ya p\$#@. I could not live without boxers—my life would be miserable. Muthafu@#\$\$% Fruit of the Loom.

SB: Nike and some underwear—clean underwear—everyday. The briefs—the kind that look like bicycle pants.

Any on-stage fashion disasters?

JB: Hell naw, what da f&^% dat mean?

SK: Naw.

SB: No, not really, 'cause I haven't had no money, so I know how to put thangs together.

Yo Majesty's *Yo EP* is out now on Out There Recordings.

www.myspace.com/yomajesty4life

PHOTO SETH WALKER

BUNNY RABBIT & BLACK CRACKER

What's your sound?

Bunny Rabbit: Heartbeats of lions and tigers and bears, Christmas carols, and children laughing at the playground.

Black Cracker: Cats in an alleyway in heat, domestic violence, a sort of inner violence that is sexy from afar but from more close up has disturbingly bad breath.

Describe your look.

BR: Dollar-store snow globes of the Last Supper, porcelain angel wings, air-brushed "baby girl" tees, temporary tattoos of clichéd Chinese dragons, and colored bows.

BC: Broken-pigeon-wing hoodies and handkerchief halos, hollow rum bottles and high waters.

Name one article of clothing you can't live without.

BR: My teddy bear and cubic zirconia, cuddle buddies and cheap promise rings.

BC: I try and wear my love like fresh kicks leaving the footprints of humanity's possibilities in the snow.

Any on-stage fashion disasters?

BC: One time I asked a friend of mine to come on stage and dance. She ended up taking all her clothes off and kicking her arms and legs hysterically, caught me in the back of the head, made my mouth smash into the mic, busted my lip, and stained my shirt.

Bunny Rabbit's *Lovers and Crypts* and Celena

Glenn's poetry book, *The Writings of Black Cracker*, are out now. www.myspace.com/loversandcrypts

PHOTO KIM REIERSON



YELLE

YELLE & GRAND MARNIER

What's your sound?

Yelle: My music is like a lollipop with a bit of spice in it. Dance booty music for dreams. Music for skirt-chasers.

GM: Grand Marnier's liquor! Le rap, le rock, la pop, et le funk—a mix of all this music.

Describe your look.

Y: Chic and fun with colors. A bit sexy.

GM: Nike Air Marty McFlys with fluorescent laces.

Name one article of clothing you can't live without.

Y: The bling-bling sounds of my wristlets.

GM: My sneakers. I can't wear anything else on my feet.

Any on-stage fashion disasters?

Y: I did a live show at the Eurockéennes Festival in France with the price label stuck on my sweater hood. I think nobody saw it... I hope.

GM: Yelle's price ticket on her back.

Yelle's debut album is out this spring on Source Inc.
www.yelle.fr, www.myspace.com/gdmarnier

PHOTO GUILLAME BERG

JUICEBOXXX

What's your sound?

Juiceboxxx is energy music! Years of punk shows and rap/dance radio have set the tone. I love anything with the NRG vibe, be it The Ramones or Rod Lee.

Describe your look.

High-energy, wacky, loud, and fun. I like to dress with color because it makes sense to me as a rapper.

Name one article of clothing you can't live without.

My shoes, although occasionally I lose them. (Shouts to the Laff Factory.)

Any on-stage fashion disasters?

I'm too busy raging but I'm sure it has happened. Fuck it though. You only live once!

Juiceboxxx & Dre Skull "Sweat" (Vicious Pop) and his split 7" with Japanther (on Decorated) are out now.

www.juiceboxxx.com

PHOTO SARAH SMALL

PR

PASE ROCK

What's your sound?

T-Ski Valley meets Peaches and buys her a glass of champagne, they have a night of bliss, and nine months later they birth a baby boy named The Pase Rock and he loves him some Powerule.

Describe your look.

My personal style is my personal Jesus, dick-slapping you with it 'til you fucking believe us, Slim.

Name one article of clothing you can't live without.

Every time I go to Japan I buy these checker-print socks from BEAMS. They cost like \$9 U.S. and are the best socks ever on the entire planet.

Any on-stage fashion disasters?

I've seen Amanda Blank's ass several times, but I don't think it was an accident. You wanna see fashion disasters? Go to a Sweatheart show. It's beautiful.

Cosmo Baker and Spank Rock's *XXXPlosive Vol. 2* mix CD, featuring Pase Rock and Amanda Blank, is out now. www.myspace.com/thepaserock

PHOTO SARAH SMALL

UFFIE

What's your claim to fame?

I always have a whiskey-Coke handy. Saves me from throat problems and stage fright.

Describe your look.

You will know exactly how I am feeling by my face and outfit. If I am feeling really up, happy, and girly, I love dresses with high tops and gold chains. If I am tired or in a bad mood, I am in jeans or a tracksuit.

Name one article of clothing you can't live without.

At the moment, this blue vintage jumpsuit I found in Australia. It gets difficult on tour looking good each day when you have slim-to-no brain function. This suit is gorgeous and amazing and makes you look great!

Any on-stage fashion disasters?

I think ahead and always have hot pants handy. Sadly, I don't have any stories but ask me again in a couple months and I am sure I will have some juice then.

"Hot Chick" b/w "In Charge" is out now on Ed Banger Records, with a full-length later in the year. www.myspace.com/uffie

PHOTO HARLAN ERSKINE

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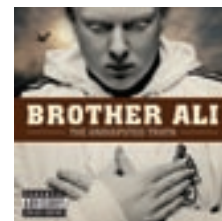
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Brother Ali

Album
 Reviews
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THE DEVOUT MUSLIM MC'S LATEST
 QUEST TO ROOT OUT EVIL

BROTHER ALI
THE UNDISPUTED TRUTH
 Rhymesayers/US/CD

Brother Ali, Rhymesayers' righteous albino wordsmith, is a powerhouse who spits tricky rhymes with the force and consistency of a steel piston. He revels in his work and his craft, and it's no coincidence that a few of the blues-based beats he raps over on *The Undisputed Truth*, his second proper album, resemble work songs. A perfectionist obsessed with his own struggle and skills, Ali's favorite subject, as he makes clear on "Take Me Home," is himself.

On *The Undisputed Truth*, Ali delves deeper into the tricky topic of the self, making the physical dressing-down he did on "Forest Whitiker" (from 2004's *Shadows on the Sun*) seem skin-deep by comparison. Considering his battle-rap history, it's not surprising that Ali spends plenty of time verbally assaulting a nameless other, usually a clueless MC or some stylized major-label-created thug. But after hearing his newfound confessional side and workaholic boasts, that "other" could easily be his own reflection, so serious are his drive and standards. Ali never applies criticism he won't direct at himself, and on *The Undisputed Truth*, the title itself a goal. He needs to "Kill the devil where he resides/Even if he's in me/He has to die," he warns on "Freedom Ain't Free."

During the gap between this album and *Shadows*, Ali got divorced and became a single father, and it's clear the process sparked a serious period of self-reflection and recalibration for the devout Minnesota-based Muslim. The track that directly addresses the break-up, a laid-back jam called "Walkin' Away," sounds happy, except for lyrics like "If you didn't try to kill me/I'd have stayed for the kid." Ali still has his pride and puffs his chest a bit, but on "Faheem," where he imparts wisdom to his son, he deflates a bit. ("You have a genuine goodness inside you/Wonder if I was ever like you," he confesses to his boy.) Combine that with the track "Here"—on which Ali turns the process of putting a house up for sale into a clever metaphor about letting another person see his imperfect inner-self—and it's clear he's been processing his pain. But Ali never loses his earnestness, and despite some lyrical bricks and a few weak tracks (like "Listen Up"), he avoids sappy melodrama, instead reflecting a depth of feeling with universal appeal.

Producer Ant is once again at the boards on *Truth*, perhaps a thankless job due to Ali's dominating vocal presence. The tracks strut by without much fanfare, and while the old-school hip-hop samples get old quickly, they help create economical, pre-fab frames ready to be filled with solid lyrics. It's not that Ant

lacks creativity—he just provides lean, muscular beats that do the trick, like the blues march of "Letter From the Government" or the background riff on "Puzzle." Complimenting Ali's style, Ant avoids excessive flash and experimentation, getting maximum return on the small snippets of blues, soul, and reggae he taps for raw material.

Ali isn't strictly focused on himself, though. "Letter From the Government," an anti-war screed told from the perspective of a weary soldier called to duty in the Middle East, skewers without resorting to hyperbolic rallying cries. Addressing his anonymous enemy on the battlefield, he questions, "Putting one in his brain/Like something will change?" That bluntness may be Ali's real strength as an MC, whether it's applied to conflicts overseas or the ones inside his head. *Patrick Sisson*



Photo by Ethan Levitas

BOREDOMS
SUPER ROOTS 5 AND 8

Vice/US/CD
Osaka's cult icons Boredoms take so many artistic freedoms that they belong in their own animal kingdom. And the newly reissued *Super Roots* series only reinforces that fact. These singles, studio experiments, and remixes all document the band's evolution from kabuki punks to barefooted hippie astronauts. On *Super Roots 8*, the cascades of flanged guitar on "Jungle Taitei" float above the Earth only to be welcomed home with a caffeinated, tribal drum circle. Yann Tomita's remix of "Jungle" has a sharp, fractal-funk groove that rivals Can, while frontman Yamantaka Eye's "Uh, what does this button do?" drum machine remix makes for great comedy. *Super Roots 5* is the group's most spiritual moment. "GO!!!" is a hypnotizing, hour-long masterwork drenched in blooming guitar drones, molten bass tones, and roiling cymbals. Eye shouts, "Go" to kick off the noise, and it's the only lyric the track needs. *Cameron Macdonald*



AEREOGRAMME
MY HEART HAS A WISH THAT YOU WOULD NOT GO

Sonic Unyon/CAN/CD
Scotland's Aereogramme is one of the few post-Mogwai bands still churning out epic post-rock hits that don't sound like throwaway tracks from Explosions in the Sky, Tortoise, and the like. While at times excessively emotive (see extremely sensitive pop vocals), this album finds the band tempering its submissive side with dense orchestration, a feat not quite realized on 2006's *Seclusion* or *In the Fishtank*, their collaboration with Isis. Propelled by dramatic piano scores and layers upon layers of strings, *My Heart...* is a mature record that focuses more on tone than brutality. *Fred Miketa*

ANTHONY B
HIGHER MEDITATION

Greensleeves/UK/CD
When Anthony B burst onto the burgeoning dancehall scene in the early 1990s, he caused a storm with uncompromising material addressing the widespread social injustices that have plagued Jamaica for centuries. He remained one of dancehall's most consistent voices until 2004's misjudged attempt at crossover hip-hop temporarily derailed him. *Higher Meditation* is more on form and, despite what feels like a few weak opening numbers, tracks like

the hard-hitting "Just Can't Live That Way," the ominous "Your Time Has Come," and the playful "Tired of Waiting in Vain" are in keeping with the standards we expect from him. *David Katz*

ANTIBALAS
SECURITY

Anti-/US/CD
No recording can truly capture Antibalas' soul. One must see them in the flesh, and struggle to dance in an overcrowded room, to really grasp it. With *Security*, the NYC orchestra takes a sharp turn, one that it may offend some Afrobeat purists. Actually, they sometimes seem to be more bent on entertaining vacationers at the Abuja Hilton than inciting revolution. (Witness the kitschy organ melodies that smile too long on "Hilo" and "Age.") However, Antibalas' lost grit is otherwise compensated for by grooves that are steady and alive enough to last all night. It needs more woodblock, though. *Cameron Macdonald*

APOSTLE OF HUSTLE
NATIONAL ANTHEM OF NOWHERE

Arts & Crafts/CAN/CD
Known primarily for his role as lead guitarist of indie rock behemoth Broken Social Scene, Andrew Whiteman's first love is Apostle of Hustle. The group's second album, *National Anthem of Nowhere*, favors fuzzy basslines and anthemic choruses. Opener "My Sword Hand's Anger" is a subdued charmer with breathy vocals and understated guitars, while "Cheap Like Sebastian" and the title track channel the feel-good vibes of BSS. Even the Latin-tinged pop of their previous record is revisited on "¡Rafaga!" Though far from groundbreaking, *National Anthem of Nowhere* is a solid collection of indie-pop suites for the modern slacker. *Josiah Hughes*

AZYMUTH
AZIMUTH REMASTERED & REMIXED

Far Out/UK/CD
This 1974 debut from psychedelic Brazilian funkateers Azymuth gets the remaster/reissue treatment it deserves. Displaying their unique melding of electric jazz, funk, and the casual swing of Brazilian samba, *Azymuth* is a classic album and the perfect playground for the remix talent that contributes to the second disc. Peanut Butter Wolf lends a production hand to the breezy, organ-led jazz of "Morning," while remix don Spiritual South deftly reworks "Wait for My Turn" from slo-mo funk into cut 'n' paste samba. The revitalization process continues throughout with new takes on old classics by Reclouse, Marc Mac, and Yam Who? *Joshua P. Ferguson*

VICTOR BERMON
ARRIVING AT NIGHT

Hefty/US/CD
For those who think that homespun, lo-fi bedroom-tronica isn't "street" enough, Victor Berman is here to inject more than a little boom-bap into its pastoral existence. Boldly stepping out like an extroverted introvert, Berman pairs Frankenstein-like ambition with earnest, infinitely beautiful instrumentation and some DJ Premier-wise beats. At times, that combo provides perfect balance, but not always. And when it doesn't, *Arriving at Night* seems more suited to an EP than a full-length. *Brian Paul*

BLACK MILK
POPULAR DEMAND

Fat Beats/US/CD
In the tradition of Dilla and Ta'Raach, Black Milk represents Motown's hip-hop landscape with fiery flows and battle-ready beats. Milk's style recalls Method Man's surging, visually poetic verses, the kind that hit your cranium with acute urban imagery and vicious metaphors. "Sound the Alarm," with roughneck MC Guilty Simpson, is signature 313 hip-hop: distressed snares, spacey soul samples, and dropouts that punctuate like aural potholes. "Say Something," which features Nametag and Slim S.D.H., sounds like Madlib and Oh No on a Kanye beat as pianos and Michael McDonald samples tiptoe around Milk-and-crew's stop-start verses. *Tomas Palermo*

BLONDE REDHEAD
23

4AD/US/CD
Blonde Redhead's sharp, blustery noise rock used to get compared to early Sonic Youth, but it would require mental gymnastics to make that leap with the band's latest, *23*, a collection of baroque, atmospheric rock songs that even boasts a Beatles-esque French horn solo. Continuing the metamorphosis of *Misery Is a Butterfly*, Kazu and the Pace twins add shoegaze-y lushness to their dark ambiance, incorporating more soaring vocals and churning guitar. Admirable, but too often the drums lock into a rhythm and the songs slip into placid grooves that cry out for some punk adrenaline. *Patrick Sisson*

GUI BORATTO
CHROMOPHOBIA

Kompakt/GER/CD
Now that he's covered all of the Kompakt sublabels, Gui Boratto finally makes it to the mothership with his debut long-player. Blending emotive charm and microcosmic beat programming, tracks like "Terminal" and "Hera" charge the air with a refined electric sizzle while snappy, back-beaten grooves keep things moving forward. "Gate 7" and "Shebang" employ Jeff Mills-like minimalism with hypnotic loop-layering and serpentine modulation, stopping on a dime and re-engaging for a little dancefloor whiplash. "Mala Strana" and "The Verdict" round the album off nicely with some lightly seasoned ambient downtime. *Doug Morton*

CALLA
STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

Beggars Banquet/US/CD
After eight years weathersing NYC's punishing rock scene, Calla's dark indie rock feels as fresh as ever. *Strength in Numbers* takes inviting strides towards mass appeal: pretty, ethereal notes help temper Calla's blistering guitars and despondent vocals, tapping into something rugged and forlorn. Aurelio Valle's breathy tones add a sensual touch to his band's brooding moods ("Malicious Manner"), while *Strength's* catchiest tune, "Simone," is Calla's most Snow Patrol-esque—a big, showy ballad, rife with noisy guitar and exuberant energy, showing why sometimes, aiming at the masses can be the most creative option of all. *Melanie Chen*

CAPITAL D
RETURN OF THE RENEGADE

All Natural/US/CD
In this young man's rap game, the odds are stacked against Capital D: he's over 30, a lawyer, and married. But on his third album, this Chicago veteran proves that nothing can keep him from remaining relevant. Atop blazing uptempo beats, Cap effortlessly kicks "street sense with degrees to boot" ("Street Knowledge") and makes "the downtrodden wanna get down" ("Ups & Down"). When not dropping uplifting gems, he flexes his superior storytelling skills on the funk-filled "Game the Mic," a vivid portrait of a bustling day in Cap's native Hyde Park 'hood. It's hip-hop that nearly anyone can enjoy. *Max Herman*

DAVID DANIELL
COASTAL

Xeric/US/CD
Drone music is difficult to make—and keep—captivating. But it's something that *Coastal* achieves in its best moments, notably the delicate eight minutes that open "Palmetto," where a shimmering mid-tone and a low, oscillating pulse play tag with silence. But Daniell—who plays with Tim Barnes, Thurston Moore, and many other "out" music greats—really shines when he pulls out the acoustic guitar. On "Sunfish," he riffs and loops into thick psychedelia, then leaps into soulful, bent notes, while on "Glasswort," a little blues guitar turns dark dirges and rustling into a song you can follow. *Eric Smillie*

DAVID KARSTEN DANIELS
SHARP TEETH

Fat Cat/US/CD
There's a tremendous amount of grief at the core of David Karsten Daniels' debut Fat Cat release, *Sharp Teeth*: a Bible belt despondency and Southern gothic guilt that fellow beard-bard Will Oldham has made a career of underscoring. So *Sharp Teeth* is heavy stuff, both lyrically and musically. But the record's charm lies in each song's (not-so-hidden) silver lining. Whether it's a boney acoustic number ("Jesus and the Devil"), a lush and crowded boier ("Minnows"), or a permutation of both (the rest of the record), *Sharp Teeth* never sags under its own weight, balancing light and dark masterfully. *Robbie Mackey*

DENZEL & HUHN
PARAPORT

City Centre Offices/GER/CD
Denzel & Huhn can whirl and glitch like it's 1999. That may sound glib, but there's no denying this Berlin duo's fondness for thickly layering the textural grit and digital effluvia that marked Mille Plateaux's infatuation with sonic errata. Championed by To Rococo Rot, Bertram Denzel and Erik Huhn often mirror that band's mesmerizing pulsations, understated menace, and winsome melodiousness. D&H serves up eerie, sub-aquatic dub as viscous and prickly as Pole's and artfully smears crackling tones like Farben and Fennesz. This IDM is a cut (and a click) above. *Dave Segal*

DETALLES
MICROS MORNINGS

Kupei Musika/US/CD
Seattle-based Kupei Musika's first full-length release, *Micros Mornings* by Detalles (classically trained Chicago composer Kate Simko and Chilean techno master Andres Bucci), is an auspicious beginning. The 11 tracks here ooze class and intelligent restraint; Simko and Bucci are minimalists who pack every facet of their music with the highest quality ingredients. This is microhouse with exquisite percussion and keyboard timbres, mellifluous melodies, expert arrangements, and soft-cushioned yet insistent beats. One can imagine Michael Mayer mulling over which tracks to include on his next *Immer* mix. (May I suggest "Distance" or "Hello Donee?") Yes, *Micros Mornings* is that sublime. *Dave Segal*

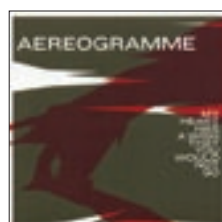
DOMINGO
The Most Underrated

Latchkey/US/CD
Domingo isn't exaggerating much when he calls himself "the most underrated." Despite carrying a production résumé that boasts top-notch singles with KRS-One, Big Pun, Non-Phixion, and others, this NYC native has received very little recognition over the years. Unfortunately, even with his debut, he's not likely to garner wide acceptance—most of these robust, sample-driven tracks (with Big Daddy Kane, Guru, etc.) sound like they could have been recorded a decade ago. But while Domingo hasn't conformed to modern production trends, he still delivers East Coast-centric fire nearly every time. Nostalgic hip-hoppers will love this album. *Max Herman*



SCRATCH MASSIVE
TIME

Nocturne/FRA/CD
Having put their major-label romance with Warner well behind them, Maud Geffray and Sebastien Chenut advance their nouveau-electro agenda with an album of monumental proportions. Reeling from recent successes like "Girls on Top" (on the MBF label) and "Shining in My Vein," the French duo constructs a vibe out of dark, electro caresses, acknowledging the roots of their craft while sidestepping any new wave or electroclash redundancy. The album gets off to a Kraftwerk-inspired start with "Fake Lesbian" before downshifting into the heavy, circuit-fried melody of "Shadows" and the ethereal helices of "Soleil Noir," where luminous atmospherics and Geffray's distant vocals are offset by a strobing analog rhythm section of unprecedented filth. These tracks are fresh and massive indeed, and with mastering from Berlin's legendary Moritz Von Oswald (Rhythm & Sound, Basic Channel), the grit and body of the album is astounding. *Doug Morton*

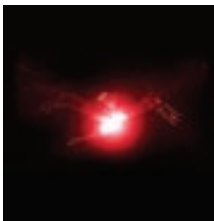




ELECTRELANE
NO SHOUTS, NO CALLS

Too Pure/UK/CD

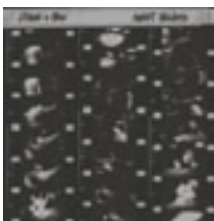
Previously, Electrelane's records reveled in the space between pop accessibility and post-rock experimentation: Yes, there were extended piano solos and noisy distortion, but there were also frontwoman Verity Susman's soft vocals and catchy harmonies. However, on the band's fourth album, they tip the scale rather briskly to the pop side, and it's all for the better. "To the East" sounds like Nico fronting The Strokes, whereas "Five" brings together the best parts of Sonic Youth and Stereolab. It seems like Electrelane has realized what most bands only dream of: the perfect balance. *Cameron Cook*



EL-P
I'LL SLEEP WHEN YOU'RE DEAD

Definitive Jux/US/CD

Last year, Def Jux barely registered a blip on the hip-hop radar, but if the label's head honcho El-P can help it, 2007 will tell a different story. On El's long-overdue sophomore solo shot, his intricate beats and rhymes sound as if they were inspired by an impending apocalypse—like calculated chaos. At times, like on the overly busy, rock-tinged "Dear Sirs," his sonic angst can get the best of him. But more often his layered synths, dirty drums, and abstract social commentary makes for some quality next shit—just what Def Jux needs to resurface in '07. *Max Herman*



ELUVIUM
COPIA

Temporary Residence/US/CD

Previously known for his balance of guitar-washed drone and ambient noise, Matthew Cooper's Eluvium project shows maturation through controlled simplicity on *Copia*.

Without guitars, the record lends a sense of timelessness to Eluvium's pastoral pieces. At times, as on "Prelude for Time Feelers," his work surpasses his peers', achieving a level of sincerity on par with composers like Arvo Pärt. Even less structured tracks, like "Seeing You Off the Edges," are clear and intentional. By subtracting layers and letting his compositions stand on their own, Matthew Cooper has created a profound and lasting record. *Josiah Hughes*

FRANZ & SHAPE
ACCELERATION

Relish/SWI/CD

In 2005, a 2ManyDJs bootleg saw Franz & Shape's crazed electro-slammer "Countach" bumping uglies with LCD Soundsystem's "Daft Punk..." so hard that anybody who heard it instantly wanted more. Fast-forward to the Italian twosome's debut LP, *Acceleration*, which is both more and less than we bargained for. *Acceleration* goes past the darkly sexed modulating synths of instrumentals like "Countach" and "Channel One" to slide into outright new-wave fetishism. The dirty backbone is still there, but now comes coquettishly draped in Soft Cell-esque guest vocals—how you'll take this depends on your opinion of '80s revivalism in general. *Anna Balkrishna*

FRIVOLOUS
MIDNIGHT BLACK INDULGENCE

~scape/GER/CD

Decadent and enchanting, *Midnight Black Indulgence* weaves a nocturnal narrative with chapters spanning the emotional and stylistic gamut. Gardner's virulent 4/4 tech-house minimalisms twist and bump on tracks like "Sooo Savey" and "Forget the Funk," but it's the sleek, scat-jazz allure of "The Long Way" and the opiate-like "Abandoned Earth" that indicate the depth of his mastery. Textural subtleties and lightly swirled melancholy are interlaced throughout the album, bringing out a richness in character rarely achieved by many outside of Matthew Herbert or Luciano. The title says it all. *Doug Morton*

GUS GUS
FOREVER

Gung Ho!/UK/CD

On their fifth album, Gus Gus appears to be adhering strictly to the adage "Fuck art, let's dance." Now stripped down to a core trio—Biggi Veira, Earth, and President Bongo—alongside a handful of collaborators (Pall Oskar, Aaron Carl, former member Daniel Agust), the group frequently looks towards archetypal dance-music lyricism rather than anything consciously "arty." Nevertheless, they manage to appropriate an Argentinian football chant: "If you don't jump, you're English," they declare in the song of the same name. If you ain't jumpin' to *Forever*, check that your legs aren't broken. *David Hemingway*

KIERAN HEBDEN AND STEVE REID
TONGUES

Domino/UK/CD

British laptop musician Kieran Hebden (Four Tet) and legendary jazz drummer Steve Reid's two previous releases generated much challenging improv jazztronica. Both discs abounded with sonically adventurous and spiritually fulfilling spontaneous creativity. *Tongues* features more concise pieces that foreshadow some fantastic new species of noise rock and genre-defying experimentation. It's a shocking turn of events, but *Tongues* rivets from start to finish. The duo is both unchained and disciplined, two masters thriving in a "hellbent for freedom" scenario. Hebden has never unleashed a more staggering array of digital freakery, while Reid matches him with phenomenal athleticism. *Dave Segal*

HEY-O-HANSEN
THE 06 SINGLES

Hey Reck/GER/CD

The 06 Singles is an intriguing and rewarding piece of dancefloor science from a priceless Berlin oddity who purveys killer Deutsch-Afro-Alpine dubstep sounds. This collection of the six singles and five remixes released over the last year touches on everything from the maximal (the accordion stomp of "Moon" and the crushing Amens of Karl Marx Stadt's "Extinguisher" remix) to the minimal (Harzkrafthof's gorgeous, slinky, techno remix of "Gogogo") and everything in between. Rasta/African-inflected vocals also add serious depth. This one's a gem. *Matt Earp*



Cyann & Ben

CYANN & BEN
SWEET BELIEFS

Ever/US/CD

Put a set of headphones on and *Sweet Beliefs* will hurl you into outer space; not a surprising feat for the Parisian quartet that already has three albums of noodly, starfield post-rock under its belt. With each record, C&B has made changes on the microscopic level, refining their winding washes down to the core. *Sweet Beliefs* seems to be the distillate, the end result of all this toiling. And while it's tempting to fault the band for seeing their sound through to its logical end, or neglecting to push things anywhere else, there's just too much heartbreaking beauty ("In Union With"), too much spookiness ("Words), and way too many sonic treats at work to damn it. Can a band get too good at being itself? In the case of C&B, the answer is a resounding no. *Robbie Mackey*

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J DILLA RUFF DRAFT

Stones Throw/US/CD

With several great songs (and a bonus instrumental disc) added to the original, vinyl-only 2003 version, *Ruff Draft* feels like yet another miraculous, posthumous gift from the ghostly hands of production master J Dilla. It's best to avoid hyperbole when discussing Dilla beats but it's hard to imagine a better 1-2-3-4-5 punch in his catalog than "Let's Take It Back," "Reckless Driving," "Nothing Like This," "The \$," and "Interlude"—brief, emotive blasts that perfectly preview what was to come on his masterful 2006 LP, *Donuts*. Anyone with any interest in hip-hop or music production needs to get this. *Jesse Serwer*

JUMBONICS

TALK TO THE ANIMALS

Tru Thoughts/UK/CD

Ditching their predominantly instrumental productions for a more song-based, vocal-led album, Jumbonics welcomes vocalist Norman Anderson on their sophomore effort for Tru Thoughts. The addition of Anderson's vocals puts them in a similar vein to Plant Life, showing their shared love of organ-driven, '60s soul. Although a bit sugary, their signature soulful and jazzy punch still shines through. It's their instrumental tracks that steal the show here, proving that they haven't lost their ability to combine disco strings and funk drums with a b-boy aesthetic specially tailored to wreak havoc on the dancefloor. *Joshua Ferguson*

KASSIN+2

FUTURISMO

Luaka Bop/US/CD

It can't be easy competing with the adored *baile* funk of Rio. But in the final installment of Moreno Veloso, Domenico Lancelotti, and Alexandre Kassin's +2 trilogy, these Brazilians don't seem to be too worried about appeasing hipsters. This album, directed by vocalist/bassist Kassin, is actually rooted in the traditional sounds of Brazil with only a hint of modernism added to the mix. Songs like the subtle *bossa nova*-styled opener "Tranquilo" or the past-meets-present number "Samba Machine" offer a fascinating look into the rich sonic soul of Rio. *Max Herman*

KATE WAX

THE DARK HEAT COLLECTION I & II

Mental Grooves/SWI/CD

With two concurrent releases, Kate Wax squeezes new life from last year's excellent debut, *Reflections of the Dark Heat*. *Collection I* is a curious afterthought, a mere reshuffling of the original album's tracks with unreleased material. The real goods come with *Collection II*, a stellar remix package that sees Wax's intensely weird electro machinations warmed up by fellow heavy-hitters. Ellen Allien & Apparat patch the fractures in the foreboding "Beetles & Spider," buoying Wax's icy soprano with a metallic, beach-ball bounce. Meanwhile, her PJ Harvey screech on "Killing Your Ghost" is a lynchpin for labelmate St. Plomb's deep-house grooves. *Anna Balkrishna*

KILO

KILO

Onitor/GER/CD

When thinking about the minimal genre, one ponders clicks, pops, spastic edits, and repetition, but these generalizations should be thrown out the window when listening to Kilo. The duo of Florian Bogner and Markus Urban sketches a soundscape of bizarre ambient electronics, adding organic instruments including a double-bass, guitar, trumpet, and several other horns. Mixed with a hypnotic jazz feel, and washed in a load of experimental synth charm, this is a fantastic fusion of neo-pop and microhouse. While pressing the limits of studio trickery, these folktronic pioneers also push the limits of improvisation. *Praxis*

BARRINGTON LEVY

ENGLISHMAN

Greenleeves/UK/CD

Appearing from nowhere at the end of the 1970s, Barrington Levy astounded the reggae world: The epitome of non-digital dancehall, Levy's yodeling was backed by Roots Radics rhythms cut at Channel One, and voiced and mixed at King Tubby's—all prime ingredients for classic material. Picking up where *Shine Eye Gal*, *Bounty Hunter*, and *Shaolin Temple* left off, *Englishman* is pure niceness, containing mostly roots reality tunes about everyday life and relationships. Sterling production by Henry "Junjo" Lawes and two bonus 12-inch mixes from Errol Scorchers are featured as well. Top notch! *David Katz*

LIFESAVAS

GUTTERFLY: THE ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK

Quannum/US/CD

The Lifesavas' new project transports you into a '70s car-chase sequence. *Gutterfly*, an unfinished blaxploitation film, is resurrected sonically with thoughtful MCs and powerhouse beats. With Camp-Lo, Butterfly (of Digable Planets), and Dead Prez on board, this hypothetical movie soundtrack is soaked in funk and attitude—part contemporary rap, part '70s throwback. Like most of these 15 tracks, numbers like "Take Me Away" and "Shine Language" combine smooth grooves, thick basslines, and swift vocals. And with an appearance by George Clinton, you know things are funky. Recommended. *David Ma*

TOBIAS LILJA

TIME IS ON MY SIDE

n5MD/US/CD

Tobias Lilja's sophomore album brings to mind the term "ambient emo." There have been few proponents of the subgenre because it isn't easy to execute without sounding ridiculous. In fact, it takes great poise: David Sylvian, Martyn Bates, and Mark Hollis all predate *Time Is on My Side's* chilling torch songs. Lilja's voice may not be as pliable and emotive as those esteemed singers, but he does convey undeniable sincerity and acute pain through his woeful lyrics. Lilja conjures tundras of synth flourishes laced with skeins of guitar and violin, and their amorphous ache will chill you to tears. *Dave Segal*



Do Make Say Think

DO MAKE SAY THINK

YOU, YOU'RE A HISTORY IN RUST

Constellation/CAN/CD

Do Make Say Think's fifth record sounds like a celebration—and it should. Twelve years into their career, the Ontario-based post-rock quintet is more relevant than ever, having established themselves as forerunners of DIY instrumental rock. *You, You're a History in Rust* marks a strident new era for the band, with songs like "A With Living" and "In Mind" breaking the mold by including vocals for the first time. Elsewhere, "The Universe!" explodes from the start, abandoning the formulaic crescendos that once defined post-rock. Complete with guest vocals from Akron/Family and warm production from guitarist Ohad Benchetrit, *History* is a solid listen through and through. As every new record is their best, it's clear that Do Make Say Think is doing something right. *Josiah Hughes*

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LOW
DRUMS AND GUNS

Sub Pop/US/CD

"Let's bury the hatchet/Like The Beatles and The Stones," sings married couple Alan Sparhawk and Mimi Parker on "Hatchet," halfway through their band's latest album. That's one of the refreshing things about Low: While their music is intelligent, sometimes even somber, there's an underlying playfulness that conveys a genuine love for music. The lull of songs like "Breaker," with its sparse handclaps and wavering vocals, sets the tone of *Drums and Guns*, a comforting patchwork of indie ballads complemented by Sparhawk's and Parker's reassuring harmonies. The result is great music to both chill out and reflect to. *Cameron Cook*



LYMBIC SYSTEM
LOVE YOUR ABUSER

Mush/US/CD

It sounds simplistic, but few electronic artists ever go for full-on optimism. The Bell brothers aren't interested in the negative: Their full-length debut, *Love Your Abuser*, keenly plumbs the depths of good cheer with lush melodies and a rich sampling of electronic textures. What keeps *Abuser* from sounding precious is a certain contemplative quality and a clear attention to song structure. The Bells love their melodic moments: Lone piano notes ripple like sonic pools on "Idle Wires," while the cinematic "Fall Bicycle" could provide a percussive soundtrack to your coolest drug-induced dreams. *Janet Tzou*



CÉU
CÉU

Six Degrees/US/CD

On her MySpace page, Brazilian vocalist CéU claims that her sound is "like nothing you've ever heard before," and she's not kidding. Her debut uses samba as a platform, but the direction she takes it (with the help of excellent producer Apollo Nove) is completely fresh. The sonic backdrops pull from jazz, Brazilian percussive traditions, Afrobeat, and bass-heavy midtempo electronics—and merit a record of their own. There is something universal in this young vocalist's melodies, perhaps the reason Starbucks selected her to be the first international artist in their Hear Music series—a contemporary nod akin to being read in Oprah's Book Club. Whether in her inviting English (she takes Bob Marley's "Concrete Jungle" to a whole new level) or native Portuguese, she's quick to captivate. CéU's long, sensuous syllables atop the dubby bassline on "Roda," and upbeat bursts of poetry on "Rainha" are this disc's true diamonds. *Derek Beres*

MASSONIX
SUBTRACKS

Skam/UK/CD

Yanking material from various archival formats, Graham Massey fills the 16-year hole in the Massonix release schedule with live tracks from yesteryear... Hooray. While there's no denying the eclectic merit of his work, the jittery melodies of "Debussa" and the step-sequenced cadence of tracks like "March of the Triton Titans" probably lost something while being snipped and packaged as individual album tracks. Disjointed as it might feel at times, *Subtracks* is still a fun, retrospective ride through candy-factory synth-noodling, experimental-jazz daydreams, and deep-sea transmissions, but, for Skam, it feels like filler. *Doug Morton*

MATZAK
LIFE BEGINNINGS

Boxer/GER/CD

Right on the heels of his debut 12" release on Kickboxer, young Nicolas Matuszczak goes whole-hog with a full-length dose of emotionally crafted techno, certain to raise the bar among his fellow Frenchmen. "Algol Star" and "Girl in Water" form around crisp, percolating, 4/4 guidelines while layers of delightfully caustic synth melodies and thick, warbling basslines press forward in a superbly modulated flow. There is a wistful beauty in his storyline approach—whether in the brooding heft of "Lamuerte" or the light-footed shuffle of "Physical"—that demonstrates his duality as songwriter and track-smith. *Doug Morton*

MEANEST MAN CONTEST/LANGUIS

SPLIT

Sneakmove/US/CD

This may be the first time that psyche-pop and arty hip-hop join forces on a split full-length. The sorta-Bay Area duo Meanest Man Contest carries on with a similar blend of relationship raps over spacey-yet-simple beats (present on their debut, *Merit*), whereas Languis pumps out oddities that sound like a codeine-tranquilized Brian Wilson covering Suicide—a shift from the poppy new wave of their Plug Research efforts. Although every song on *Split* is entirely dissociated from the rest of the album, both artists take great strides in pushing their individual styles to the next level. *Fred Miketa*

MEMPHIS
A LITTLE PLACE IN THE WILDERNESS

Good Fences/CAN/CD

It's hard to turn a busy song boring, but Canadian flourish-pop duo Memphis is pretty adept at that sort of fumble, letting the bow-tied compositions on their third record, *A Little Place in the Wilderness*, sag into a dull, soft-headed mush. Allegorically, it's like getting dressed for the prom only to sit on the couch watching bad TV all night long. There is promise but it's confusingly devoid of delivery. Sure, some songs actually creep through the trim, but too much of this album is content to accentuate, and not enough of it is willing to assert itself. *Robbie Mackey*

NINE HORSES
MONEY FOR ALL

Samadhisound/UK/CD

Nine Horses is the blanket moniker for David Sylvian's collaborations with brother Steve Jansen and Burnt Friedman, and *Money For All* is a mish-mash EP of new tracks, versions, and Friedman remixes from a variety of sympathetic artists like Stina Nordenstam, Atom TM, and Keith Lowe. There are interesting things going on here, not least in the subtle tensions between Sylvian's grace and sophistication and a more unexpected (and overt) sense of personal/political anger and anxiety. Even if this tension doesn't quite develop (or regress) into out-and-out discord, it feels wholly, unreservedly appropriate at this point in time. *David Hemingway*

O. LAMM
MONOLITH

Audio Dregs/US/CD

Monolith, the first U.S. release for French beat-monster O. Lamm, is a bizarre mix of cut-and-paste glitch and poppy dance music. Imagine Girl Talk collaborating with DAT Politics on some children's songs, and you'd nearly grasp his frenzied sound. 8-bit loops clash with choppy samples of conversations and violins, and guest spots from Momus and Midori Hirano add to the record's anything-goes M.O. From the orchestrated hustle of "The Macguffin" to the ADD-techno take on "Tammy Metempsycho Darling," *Monolith* is a fast-paced and often hilarious record that's too fun to resist. *Josiah Hughes*

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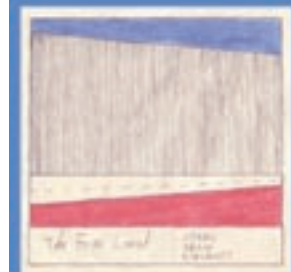


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OLLO
THE IF

12 Apostles/UK/CD

It's rare that a duo blends the heavily layered jamming of Can with the downtempo groove of Massive Attack, but Ollo succeeds with flying colors. On their second full-length, these Australian multi-instrumentalists serve up a handful of Kraut jams, incorporating spastic live drums, wah-pedaled guitars, and funk bass from space. If it's not the trippy guitar solos on "Summer Salt" that weave you into the boys' interplanetary web, it'll be the always-shifting synth pads that reel you in and take you under. *Fred Miketa*



YOKO ONO
YES I'M A WITCH

Astralwerks/US/CD

The former Mrs. Lennon is still completely bizarre, but that's always been a good thing. This collaborative project—with Peaches, Hank Shocklee, DJ Spooky, Le Tigre, and others—is generally evenhanded, allowing Ono to sing, scream, chat, and whisper over an array of soundscapes. Whether rambling over The Polyphonic Spree's symphonic rock ("You and I") or crooning alongside Cat Power ("Revelations"), Ono's mood and lyrics mesh without sounding forced. Aside from a few awkward tracks, Ono's latest is another cool tidbit in her storied, bewitching career. *David Ma*



PACHA MASSIVE
ALL GOOD THINGS

Nacional/US/CD

After last year's slightly poppy, upbeat single "Don't Let Go," Pacha Massive has turned their debut album into something rather special. The NYC-based team of multi-instrumentalist/producer Nova and vocalist/bassist Maya relies on a pastiche

of sliced, nicely punctuated beats and a host of folksy guitars and flutes. Recalling an older Aterciopelados, Maya's voice is more R&B-smooth than Andrea Echeverri's, though it is equally tempered by soulful inquisitiveness. Sung in rapid flourishes of Spanglish and exquisitely produced, *All Good Things* indicates that many good things are to come from this boogie-down Dominican/Colombian team. *Derek Beres*

PANDA BEAR
PERSON PITCH

Paw Tracks/US/CD

Don't judge Noah "Panda Bear" Lennox by his cutesy name or his even cuter affiliation with the neo-folk-electronic-acoustic band Animal Collective. Lennox's solo work lets his musical talents shine, and *Person Pitch* reveals his real interest: layering tones and atmospheres into songs like an audio collage, with tracks like "I'm Not" forming a delicate aural mosaic. *Person Pitch's* opener, "Comfy In Nautica," is one of Lennox's most striking pieces, offering a pitch-perfect study in harmony and rhythm that might double as a hymn for some celestial cathedral, floating breezily above the clouds. *Janet Tzou*

PANTHA DU PRINCE
THIS BLISS

Dial/GER/CD

Echoing his Dialed-in peers—most notably label co-founder Lawrence—Pantha du Prince saturates *This Bliss* with hammer-derived sounds (or their synthetic equivalents), layering *glockenspiel* and so on over a seductive house template. This album, Hendrik Weber's second long-player under his Pantha du Prince alter-ego, was apparently partially produced in an old Parisian monastery—for all that, it is very, very lovely—yet this isn't an album that's particularly tranquil or calming. Rather, *This Bliss* is twitchy and restless, as if shot through with a hearty dose of caffeine. *David Hemingway*

PANTHERS
THE TRICK

Vice/US/CD

Perhaps it's the influence of being remixed by MSTRKRFT (who filter-funked the 2004 single "Thank Me With Your Hands"). Or perhaps it's from hunching in the shadow of the MC5's 'fro. But on *The Trick*, the group's second Vice full-length, Brooklyn's Panthers' pounce comes across as part-DFA1979's overdriven lashing and part-Wolfmother's fried boogie. Toned down is the post-hardcore arrhythmia of earlier recordings, and dialed in is a Queens of the Stone Age-style skuzzy strut. Though by no means less crotch-driven, *The Trick* sounds more humid and less harried, equally cranked yet less cracked. *Tony Ware*

SAINT ETIENNE
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TODAY, MERVYN DAY?

Foreign Office/UK/CD

Though plastic and petrol were invented there, East London's lower Lea Valley is now an unloved and derelict industrial wasteland. Nevertheless, Saint Etienne and collaborator Paul Kelly have documented the area on film, ahead of its redevelopment to make way for the 2012 Olympics. Scattered with dialogue from the area's inhabitants, Saint Etienne's soundtrack is a thing of unassuming beauty, chock-full of vaguely wistful instrumentals that neither romanticize nor disparage the subject matter. Saint Etienne has always been a group of collectors; somewhere along the way they've become social historians, too. *David Hemingway*

SCONE
MAZE

Moamoo/JPN/CD

Once upon a time, the fact that artists collaborated via the internet was a big deal. Still, the Scone project offers one of the concept's finer results, fusing together Dutch electronic artists Funckarma (longtime believers of cyberspace production via their hip-hop work with Shadow Huntaz) with the elusive Kettel. Their full-length, *Maze*, conjures a super-slick universe where insanely tricky rhythms and sophisticated melodies collide: "Swieso," "Do," and "SNTH65" offer Scone's stirring retakes on old-school IDM, while "Luttel" dissolves into 3/4 funk shuffles. A rare find and an absolute must for IDM aficionados. *Janet Tzou*

SEBASTIAN
ROSS ROSS ROSS

Ed Banger/FRA/CD

After his "Smoking Kills" 12" dropped, it was hard to believe that Ed Banger's harshest producer could make an album that would rival his "killer" single. But on *Ross Ross Ross*, the Frenchman serves up a platter of drilling hits that keenly follows suit. While half of the album includes his remixes of other artists, from Annie to Uffie to



THES ONE
LIFESTYLE MARKETING

Tres/US/CD

In 1969, German-born composer Herb Pilhofer helped launch the first digital recording studio in the States. On *Lifestyle Marketing*, People Under the Stairs' producer Thes One fittingly canonizes Pilhofer for his unique vision, but mostly for his catalog of distinctive, synthesizer-tinged commercial jingles. On the first of *Lifestyle's* two CDs, Thes utilizes tasteful loops and crisp, reverberating beats to celebrate Pilhofer's flowery compositions. MCs are hardly missed on the light, flowery "Target," powered by Thes' stuttering string snippets and mid-tempo breaks, but the muffled choral samples that linger in "GBX Malt Liquor" beg for beer-muscle, boast-heavy verses. The second disc is a rundown of Thes' carefully selected favorite Pilhofer jingles as they originally appeared, swathed in Moogs and textured multi-part harmonies. When it's not inspiring inevitable cravings for "Crystal Sugar" and "Grain Belt Beer," *Lifestyle Marketing* can be an elegant instrumental experience. *Dominic Umile*



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Céu

Just when you think that Brazil must surely have exhausted its supply of jazzy, funky, sexy, soulful electro-pop singer-songwriters, someone like Céu comes along and irresistibly mixes samba, reggae, dub, electronica and soul music and makes you think that maybe that particular well is bottomless after all.



Ojos de Brujo
Techari

Ojos de Brujo are a groundbreaking collective from Barcelona who have taken flamenco and rumba traditions and kicked them on to the modern dance-floor by adding hip hop, dub and bhangra influences. *Techari* features guest appearances by Nitin Sawhney and Asian Dub Foundation.



COMING SOON:

Bebel Gilberto
Momento



Various Artists
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Daft Punk, the other seven distorted bangers hit on the same plane of dance anarchy. You can call *Ross Ross Ross* fucked-up techno or chopped electro, but don't say that it isn't ahead of its time. *Fred Miketa*

SERVANTS OF THE APOCALYPTIC GOAT RAVE

Sublight/CAN/CD

Bong-Ra and Sickboy have resurrected the carcass of rave and trained it to serve their demonic visions. Whether they're layering high-octave trance synths with gnarly dirges or pounding grotesquely distorted 200-BPM-plus kicks, these two post-break-core prophets outdo any previous project they've ventured upon. You can't help but love a song entitled "Glowstyx for the Dead Children," which incorporates simple organ sounds, bestial, processed swells, and the fever of jungle at its most intense. If Anton LaVey had a record label, *Servants* would most certainly be the first (and maybe last) release. *Fred Miketa*

SILICON SCALLY BIOROID

Satamile/US/CD

Carl Finlow is apparently completely incapable of releasing a shitty album, although he's shed a bit of his brooding, corrosive Scallyness this time around in favor of kicking the crap out of the dancefloor. Finlow's tracks, like "Population III" and "Encapsulate," are too robofunkastic to be denied—full of good, solid mechanical breaks. While the spacey-ness of the album doesn't drift as far into the subconscious as *Dark Matter* or *Mr. Machine*, cuts like "Moment" and "Interflexion" carve a psychoactive electro niche that is uniquely Finlow's. *Doug Morton*



PANTHER SECRET LAWS

Fryk Beat/US/CD

The one-man band about Portland known as Panther (a.k.a. Charlie Salas-Humara) receives some shit-hot accolades. "Best fucking band I've ever seen," raved Portland's alt weekly, and the writer was probably right. These 13 songs go by in 30 minutes, much like a live Stooges album—unrivaled in its hyper pace, guttural wails, and sheer frenetic energy. But Panther also has pop songwriting chops; when he doesn't, he punctuates his over-the-top falsetto with shouts of "Muthafucka!" to confound and evoke epic laughter, as he does on the disc's gem, "You Don't Want Yr Nails Done." Elsewhere, tracks like "How Does it Feel?" are nothing like the Velvet Underground or Avril Lavigne songs of the same name, but rather run headlong into synth-horn and drum-machine shakedown full of Prince-octave squeals and cryptic-yet-playful lyrics. Everyone's forgotten about Beck, and it's probably for the better—it's Panther's time to shine. *Ken Taylor*

SOWETO GOSPEL CHOIR AFRICAN SPIRIT

Shanachie/US/CD

There is no doubting the harmonic brilliance of the Soweto Gospel Choir, and although some tracks here suffer from glossy overproduction, *African Spirit* provides a sense of the group's emotive power. Tight points include a moving rendition of Bob Dylan's "I'll Remember You," Jimmy Cliff's "Sitting in Limbo," and the traditional "Rivers of Babylon," as well as sensitive renditions of South African folk songs like "Sefepano," "Shosholoza," and "Hlohonolofatsa." However, a definite low comes in the sadly incongruous appearance of U2's "One," taken from a live concert in which the group backed Bono in South Africa. *David Katz*

SPIRIT CATCHER NIGHT VISION

2020 Vision/UK/CD

All clichés acknowledged, the happiest I've maybe ever been was driving down a midnight freeway with my boyfriend's stereo cranked, following bad directions to a party God-knows-where. Somehow *Night Vision*, the first long-player from Belgian duo Spirit Catcher, recalls that feeling a decade later. It's not that it sounds dated or referential; a stylish compromise between deep house's soul and electro-house's arpeggiated crunch, *Night Vision* is nothing but fresh. But it's the sense of optimism written into those warm synth washes, the joy of hurtling aimlessly forward, that makes this album special. Step on the gas! *Anna Balakrishna*

THE DARK ROMANTICS SOME MIDNIGHT KISSIN'

Lujo/US/CD

While some contemporary goth-inspired indie-rock outfits get a little too crazy with the haze of effects and chaotic live performances, there are always a few bands like The Dark Romantics that bring us back down to earth. In homage to The Jesus and Mary Chain, *Some Midnight Kissin'* takes an authentically gloomy approach, but without all of the bells and whistles. Howling vocals poised against incessantly driving guitars and catchy-as-hell licks make these romantics stand out amongst the post-punk fiends. *Fred Miketa*

TINARIWEN AMAN IMAN

World Village/US/CD

With fans ranging from Carlos Santana and Robert Plant to Thom Yorke, this band of Tuareg blues musicians from the Malian desert has turned local fame into international acclaim. This third record (translated: "water is life") is a brilliantly executed collection of electric guitars swirling amidst handclaps, background percussion, and the effervescent chants and vocals of their revolving cast of characters. At its center, vocalist/guitarist Ibrahim Ag Alhabib—whose history deserves a book of its own—growls and harmonizes with such passion that any intrigued mind will quickly open. The depths of African blues meet amplified rock 'n' desert soul throughout. *Derek Beres*

TURBULENCE DO GOOD

Minor 7 Flat 5/GER/CD

You might recognize his signature exclamation (*bu-blah!*), but reggae sing-jay Turbulence is not as well-known as contemporaries Sizzla, Anthony B, or Capleton, even though he's released a dozen albums in half as many years. But creative productivity in reggae frequently means quality control goes out the door. Not the case on *Do Good*, as German producer Brotherman gathers Dean Frasier, Horsemouth Wallace, and other top-flight live musicians at Jamaica's Tuff Gong studio to guide this offering. Brotherman's rootsy one-drop riddims match Turbulence's strong, arcing timbre like a colorful bobo turban. It's good reggae done great! *Tomas Palermo*

CHRIS WATSON & BJ NILSEN STORM

Touch/UK/CD

Mother nature can really bring the noise. The latest collaboration between English sound archivist Chris Watson (formerly of Cabaret Voltaire and The Hafler Trio) and Swedish sound artist BJ Nilsen (Hazard) finds the two seminal field-recorderists chasing a storm system on their respective North Sea shores. Edited but unmodified, the sounds they brave the elements to collect ebb and swell through the album's three rich, mesmerizing tracks: fierce winds, stinging rains, wild beasts, and black waves roar under heavy skies. Rage on. *Eric Smillie*

OUT NOW ON SMALLTOWN SUPER SOUND

TUSSELE: TELESCOPE MIND
 Makes the last Rapture album sound like some rank American jam band - 9/10, *Vice*
 Masters of minimalist funk and motorik mantras, dons of disorienting dub, Tussele reaches a lofty peak with Telescope Mind - *XLR8R*
 Its sounds will undoubtedly reverberate long after its conception - *Soma*

LINDSTROM: IT'S A FEEDELITY AFFAIR
 Sublime nordic disco - 5/5, *DJ Magazine*
 A joyous round-up of the vinyl only singles - 4/5, *Uncut*
 Let's ride the boat! Fast! And take the Lindstrom with us! - 9/10, *Lowdown*

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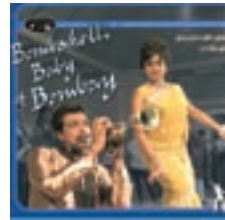
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THE ASIAN UNDERGROUND THEN AND NOW

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Bombay Connection/NETH/CD



**THE BOMBAY CONNECTION VOL. 2: BOMBSHELL
BABY OF BOMBAY-BOUNCIN' NIGHTCLUB
GROOVES FROM BOLLYWOOD FILMS 1959-1972**
Bombay Connection/NETH/CD

MIDIVAL PUNDITZ REMIXED
Six Degrees/US/CD

On his "Title Music" for the 1979 disaster flick *The Burning Train*, Bollywood music legend R.D. Burman stepped away from ballads and crooning and into the raw synthesizer grooves of his counterparts in the West—mirroring the shadowy bump of Dario Argento and the bizarre disco of Giorgio Moroder. Hearing it today on *The Bombay Connection Vol. 1*, a collection of funk from Bollywood films of the '70s and '80s, its vocoder growls and warm, melancholy proto-synth sounds seem quaint. But Burman's music is also a sonic fossil, a clue to the transformation of Bollywood soundtracks, from kitschy young things into full-grown adults, able to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the most progressive pop sounds of that era as a peer, rather than a fetishized "other."

Two new compilations from The Bombay Connection—the first of cinematic funk, the second of so-called "nightclub grooves" from the '60s and early '70s—show Indian music growing and setting off in its own directions. Take "1956, 1957, 1958" from the 1959 film *Anari*. The mixed-language jazz romp could fit right into a Fellini nightclub scene with its hedonistic swirl and lyrics that celebrate the dawning of a new age. "Bum Pam..." is post-Stones and Ventures rock from 1971, but with thoroughly Indian themes and melodies; 1978's "Giraffe Trapping Music" is pure funky library groove, punctuated by *tablas* rather than bongos. And 1981's "Dance Music," from *Ghamandee*, could've graced any progressive disco, albeit with fully integrated Asian melodies.

The "Asian Underground" scene, which burst into mainstream consciousness in the U.K. and U.S. in the early '90s, has also fought for recognition by the Western pop pantheon. But too often, the genre—which fuses traditional Indian sounds with contemporary electronic music—has been too simple: just a *dhol* beat thrown over a hip-hop hit, or a Bollywood-style chorus in the midst of a drum & bass track.

Asian Underground stars MIDival PunditZ have long circumvented such lip service by seamlessly threading Asian themes and rhythms throughout their fully realized dance

tracks. Instead of being painted into a musical corner by their own ethnic identity, PunditZ's Gaurav Raina and Tapan Raj are simply excellent dance producers with a firm knowledge of their own origins—making those sounds the foundation of their musical designs, rather than a quick topcoat.

Nowhere is this more apparent than on *MIDival PunditZ Remixed* where the PunditZ, and a cast of remixers, deliver well-balanced Asian dance music of today. Contemporary names such as Karsh Kale join Indian stars like the brilliant Jalebee Cartel, whose electro-house take on PunditZ's "Raanjhan" might be the disc's highlight. Jalebee's mix frees "Raanjhan" of any *bhangra* crutches, using identifiably Asian vocals alongside synth-string stabs and a four-on-the-floor beat that could fit as easily into Metro Area's DJ sets as any world-music programming. That MIDival PunditZ—and their remixers and cohorts—have created music that proudly displays its heritage while standing on its own is the true sign of a successful fusion. But such musical maturity didn't sprout from nothing—as *The Bombay Connection* sets show, the inspirational seeds for the modern Asian Underground were planted long ago. *Justin Hopper*



EV RECORDS PRESENTS: EVERYTHING

EV/US/CD

Everything is more than a mere label compilation. This 14-track collection from Chicago's rapidly ascending EV Records showcases how well its artists play with others—a tradition that in-house producer Copperpot sparked when he began working with London MCs years ago. True to the disc's title, there's an expansive range of styles on display here from EV artists and their collaborators. Fans of hardcore hip-hop will revel in Copperpot's sinister key-driven beat and Pacewon's cautionary street-level narratives on "Here We Go." Meanwhile lyric fiends will dig the metaphorical battle raps of Diverse and Illogic on the peculiar, Overflo-produced "Vintage." But EV's own LongShot proves to be the backbone of *Everything*, appearing on three standout cuts, including "Learn," an inspiring black-empowerment anthem featuring Michigan's One Be Lo. With more material like this, 'Shot and his brethren could very well rise to the top of the indie hip-hop ranks. *Max Herman*

AFTERHOURS 3

Global Underground/UK/CD

This packed three-CD set unfolds slowly and languidly, without getting sleepy. The first disc, labeled "Organic," features tracks like the sleek house of Tosca's "Superrob." Disc Two ("Electronic") features Carl Craig's winding "A Wonderful Life," Cerrone's disco classic "Supernature," and Gus Gus's warm "Moss." And the final, lone, unmixed disc ("The Future") takes a much darker approach, anchored by Nick Galea & Native's "Dropped." This is the kind of after-hours music that's more than just the sonic wallpaper of far too many chill-out compilations. *Luciana Lopez*

KERRI CHANDLER: COAST2COAST

NRK/UK/CD

Kerri Chandler entered his teen years spinning wax on the decks of house clubs in New York, and has never looked back. *Coast2Coast*, the second installment in a new mix series from NRK, allows the renowned house don to lay down some deep house science. Leaning heavily on the groove-infused, soulful tip, straight-ahead movers (Nu Life's uplifting "My Joy") happily dance alongside some edgier fare (Phil Hooten's melodic and bouncy "Epichoregeo"). It's a journey, and an after-hours mood enhancer for the house-loving teen in all of us. *Velanche*

JT DONALDSON: FRANCHISE PLAYER 01

Swank/US/CD

On *Franchise Player 01*, former Dallas resident and Fair Park Records cofounder/in-house producer JT Donaldson rides again, with mostly predictable results. This time the influence of Chicago house bubbles up through jackin' beats and blurpy basslines that chuff away then dive spooky deep. Flanging and pitch-bending effects thrive in tracks by Blacksoul, White Lotus Society, Greenskeepers, and JT himself, with remixes included from Derrick Carter, Yoruba Soul, and Bob Sinclair. Mark Farina calls "DJ JD" his fave house producer—*Franchise Player 01* demonstrates why. *Stacy Meyn*

DR. LEKTROLUV: LIVE RECORDED AT EXTREMA OUTDOOR 2006

Lektroluv/BEL/CD

Belgian DJ Dr. Lektroluv obviously knows how to keep a crowd from getting bored: Recorded at the Dutch Extrema Outdoor festival—obviously!—this is a quick-moving, hour-plus set of banging electro that never lingers for long on any one track. With programming that mixes Etienne de Crecy, The Cure (remixed by Digitalism), and Cajmere with Dada Life and Cajuan, the result is relentless and hard-edged, always driving to the next track. If you didn't make it out to the Netherlands last year, let this be incentive for a trip in 2007. *Luciana Lopez*

ED REC VOL. 1

Ed Banger-Vice/US/download

Nu-French Touch label Ed Banger had a hell of a 2006, with Mr. Flash, Justice, and Uffie coming on full-force in Europe and the U.S. Vice Recordings has capitalized on the label's growing Stateside popularity by issuing the download-only *Ed Rec Vol. 1*, and there's no better an introduction to the bass-heavy catalog than this set. Banner tracks like Uffie's icy, vocoder-smart "Pop the Glock" and Justice's crunchy "Waters of Nazareth" come standard, but for a bit more electro-infused fun, try the DJ Mehdi-Chromeo collabo "I Am Somebody" or Crazy Baldhead's chopped-and-screwed grime take "Crazy Mothafuckers." *Aaron Ashley*

FABRIC 32: LUKE SLATER

Fabric/UK/CD

U.K. techno icon Luke Slater's DJ mix is best played softly in the car, and not while you're driving. Its eerie smoothness might induces drowsiness, no matter how loud the house and minimal techno beats smack your face. Slater makes the freeway lights dance in the fog with chosen cuts from Jurgen Driessden, Basic Channel, and Putsch '79, who proffers lysergic disco on "Doin' It." The jittery *Super Mario* electro of Audion's "Mouth to Mouth" and Slater's wobbly riffs on "Organ Bender" also yank ears. *Cameron Macdonald*

HYPHY HITZ

TVT/US/CD

Although "ghost riding the whip" made Fox News freak out, don't think the Bay Area's hyphy music movement is headed for the trend trashcan. *Hyphy Hitz* proves that a national audience is curious about the West's latest rap maneuvers. As on TVT's *Crunk Hits* series, radio favorites like Keak's "Super Hyphy," Mistah F.A.B.'s "Super Sic wit It," and The Team's "Hyphy Juice" rub shoulders with new tracks by Dem Hoodstarz, Furious, and Shake Da Mayor. Major Bay acts like Mac Dre, E-40, San Quinn, and Sky Balla also gas, break, and dip it here. Watch *this* go! *Tomas Palermo*

IMAGINE THE SHAPES

What's Your Rupture/US/CD

Over the past year, What's Your Rupture has emerged as the little indie label that could—and kept could-ing. Clawing with the big boys and signing impeccably cool band after impeccably cool band, WYR has put together a glistening roster. Here's a spread of their labor-fruit: some C-86 worship from caUSE co-MOTION, a bit of The Long Blondes' Sheffield-bred, grrl-led "glamorous punk," the cagey, belly-grumbling indie pop of Love Is All, and Comet Gain's four-track sleekness. An impressive start for a little indie that won't be little for much longer. *Robbie Mackey*

LUSINE: PODGELISM

Ghostly/US/CD

As Lusine, producer Jeff McIlwain has made a name for himself within the pop ambient world, but his *Podgelism* remixes are in an entirely different league. Featuring a stunning array of producers, from techno stalwart John Tejada to BPitch's Apparat to Ghostly's own Matthew Dear, this eclectic compilation unfolds with the grace of a track-to-track mixtape. While each piece contains layer upon layer of calming synth pads, it's the glitch-and-chop percussion of Cepia's "Flat" that gives Lusine's textures a brand new life. *Fred Miketa*

JDILLA RUFF DRAFT

Dilla's Detroit masterpiece, reissued with bonus vocal tracks, interludes, and instrumentals. 2/CD, 2/LP, and cassette.



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Spring 2007: Jaylib "Champion Sound" 2/CD. The Madlib-J Dilla collab re-issued with bonus tracks, remixes, and instrumentals



MARTINEZ: RESTRUCTURED LAYERS
Out Of Orbit/DEN/CD
Out of Orbit's first label compilation, *Restructure Layers*, aims to please the casual listener and the sweaty club patron alike. Mixed, chopped, and edited by label boss Martinez, this disc takes 37 tracks and mixes them flawlessly into a thrilling, 76-minute ride. From a shuffling and minimal groove to a full-on, peak-hour electro-tech stomp session, this flavorful mix constantly brings the excitement through a rollercoaster of moods and emotions. Featuring tracks from Trentemøller, Lowtek Soundsystem, Cantrip People, and Martinez himself, this hefty production will attract schooled techno aficionados. *Praxis*



OM: CHILLED
Om/US/CD
Chill... It's in the air, everywhere, and on far too many compilations claiming to be the definitive source. San Francisco's Om has traveled down the winding road of chill with its *Om Lounge* series, but *Om: Chilled* veers down a slightly different path. It isn't all downtempo flavor, though it starts off that way with, appropriately, Headphonism's "Stay Home and Chill"; it also features poppin' broken beats (Gil Tamazyian's jazzy "Planten's Cove"), densely layered hip-hop (Joey Youngman's bangin' "Conflict Resolution"), and spooky melodies built around shuffling beats (Bassnectar's "So Buttery"). This is chill with attitude. *Velanche*



PUTUMAYO PRESENTS: A NEW GROOVE
Putumayo/US/CD
It's easy to think hippie/folkie when you hear "world music," but Putumayo seems out to change that with their *Groove* series—and they're doing a pretty good job, too. *A New Groove* is the ninth installment, featuring a more electronic breed of world artist. Swedes Linn & Freddie contribute the infectious head-nodder "L.I.N.N.," and Brit soul-

stress Alice Russell alternately coos and belts on the swinging "High Up on the Hook." And the United States is repped by downtempo masters Thievery Corporation as well as the purring Bitter:Sweet. The result is, in fact, nicely groovy. *Luciana Lopez*

THE KINGS OF REGGAE
BBE-Rapster/UK/CD
No matter how much we evolve with digital technologies, nothing can replace the fuzzy, warm, analog sounds of classic reggae—which is why collections like this will always be welcome. Old-school reggae DJ David Rodigan knew this music in its heyday and fills Disc One with certified fist-raisers, à la Junior Murvin, The Congos, and Burning Spear. Shaggy producer Sting International moves to the more obscure and dubby, showcasing Dennis Brown and Coco Tea—equally warm though less anthemic. Overall, the 24 tracks play like most any Trojan compilation, so there's nothing new here, but it's enjoyable nonetheless. *Derek Beres*

THE TOPOGRAPHY OF CHANCE
Sonic Arts Network/UK/CD
In homage to the Fluxus artist Emmet Williams' book *An Anecdoted Topography of Chance*, British curator Stewart Lee handpicked these fine, cross-genre gems to highlight works that might represent chance operations (a favorite of John Cage's). What results is a beautifully packaged book and CD full of maps and off-the-wall sounds from weird Americana (The Trachtenburg Family Slideshow Players and psych folkie Rodd Keith) to Derek Bailey's avant take on the British folk tradition. The highlight, though, is The Fall's Mark E. Smith reading football scores recorded from BBC Sport last year. So where's Jandek and Richard Youngs? *Ken Taylor*

TRIPLE R: SELECTION 5
Trapez/GER/CD
Trapez Records boss Riley R. Reinhold is one of the best-connected DJs in the technosphere. That fact, plus his unerring ear for killer choons, makes his mix CDs overflowing banquets for 4/4 aficionados. *Selection 5* maintains the tradition, as Triple R cherry-picks quality jewels from an international roster of elite producers (Jeff Samuel, Alex Under, Nöze) and dazzling newcomers (Rico Püstel, SLG, Sandiego). The *Selection* series generally nixes rowdy anthems in favor of headier, mid-tempo, boom-tsss fare and inventive textural quirks. Nevertheless, these 20 tracks will definitely generate serious body heat. Add another "R" to Riley's moniker—reliable. *Dave Segal*

UNDER MI SLENG TENG: THE DAWNING OF DIGITAL REGGAE
Trojan/UK/CD
The mid-to-late 1980s was an exciting time in Jamaican music as reggae made the irreversibly futuristic shift from analog to digital musicianship, resulting in the birth of contemporary dancehall. This two-disc set selects 40 of the most momentous releases of the period from its outstanding figures, including Admiral Bailey, Nitty Gritty, Tenor Saw, Tiger, Chakademus, Half Pint, Sugar Minott, Frankie Paul, Ninjaman, Beres Hammond, and the Blood Fire Posse. Curated for thematic continuity and maximum aural impact, the compilation is a winner from start to finish and the liner notes provide good background context. Play loud! *David Katz*

URBAN CLUB AFRICA: HIP HOP DANCEHALL AND KWAITO
Out/Here/GER/CD
Out/Here seeks to give wider exposure to the raw, grassroots sound of contemporary urban Africa, as opposed to the adulterated, internationally minded material that is foisted on us as "world music." As the latest installment is a sort of label sampler, drawn mostly from past and upcoming releases and focusing on the most danceable cuts, it's not quite as compelling as earlier Out/Here discs, but is still miles ahead of the competition. High points include Senegalese female hip-hop group Atif, Kenyan duo Necessary Noise, Ghanaian hip life from VIP, and upfront gangsta styling from Liberia's Scientific. *David Katz*

WHITE COCK 1-4
Cock Rock Disco/US/CD
Gabber and hardcore haven't moved for 10 years. You've just got beats that *ka-thunk* like a blown tire on a freeway, and a sample reminding you that "dis is da real hardcore." *White Cock* forces those tired genres to dance by shooting at their feet. Sickboy's "DL Rocker" wins for making a damaged David Lee Roth CD sound so god-damn funky. Deacon Boombastardizer and Jason Forrest gallantly huff gas to make their breakcore sing. It's too bad that many noisemakers here are indistinguishable, even those with darling names like Duran Duran Duran and DJ Rainbow Ejaculation. *Cameron Macdonald*

WE GOT A LOT ON LOCK.

clothing, books, videos, music
and of course, the dj + producer gear



FRESHLY COMPOSTED VOL. 2
Compost/GER/CD
For their 250th release, Compost, one of Europe's most consistent and crucial dance labels, has paired rare tracks previously available only on 12" with staples from the label's current roster. Aside from critical cuts like Muallem's cosmic edit of The Droids' "Shanti Dance," and Marsmobil's thump-heavy lounge "Mangia Amore," the extended remixes will send listeners into a sonic abyss. Need evidence? With Carl Craig's 10-minute take on Beanfield's "Tides," and the paranormal Todd Terje take on Felix Laband's "Whistling in Tongues," it's obvious the label deserves some hefty credit. In addition to the outer-orbit obscurities, there are a slew of nu-jazz and hip-hop contributions from acts like Harvey Lindo, Soil & Pimp, and Ben Mono, making *Freshly Composted Vol. 2* as diverse as it is dynamic, offering treats for b-boys, disco freaks, and club kids simultaneously. *Fred Miketa*

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TURNTABLE LAB

GONZALES / Solo Piano / CD

In Stores April 3



Ever reinventing himself, **GONZALES**, perhaps best known as **CHILLY GONZALES** and for his work as a producer and MC, has embarked on his most invigorating departure yet with his new release, **SOLO PIANO**. **SOLO PIANO** finds **GONZALES** stepping away from the mic and recording console, where he made a name for himself collaborating with the likes of **FEIST**, **PEACHES**, and **JAMIE LIDELL**, to the focus of the solo piano.

GONZALES / FROM MAJOR TO MINOR / DVD

In Stores May 8



From **MAJOR TO MINOR**, the first DVD to document the universe of **GONZALES**, the musical genius, and **NINJA PLEASURE** his visual vice-president.

MASTERCLASS: featuring **FEIST**, **PHILIPPE KATERINE**, the **DAFT PUNK** robot and **TEKI LATEX**...

WHITE GLOVES: concert featuring **FEIST**, **JAMIE LIDELL**, **MOCKY**...

BONUS: The piano battle with classical improviser **JEAN-FRANÇOIS ZYGEL**, and many more clips, G spot specials and embarrassing-triumphant moments.

|| REVIEWS || COLUMNS



Basic Needs By Kid Kameleon LOW-END NECESSITIES, FROM RAGGA TO DUBSTEP AND BEYOND



Unfortunately I have to sound two sad notes to start. December and January took two bright lights out of the bass world. First, **Wai Cheng/Optic**, founder of the seminal breakcore labels Isolate and Dyslexic Response, was found dead in a friend's room in Berlin towards the end of December. Then, **Disco D**, party maniac and dancefloor innovator, took his life at the end of January, closing the book early on a stunning career that was leading him to all corners of the musical realm. The only thing I can say in such a short space is for all bass-loving folks to cherish their own lives, to stay with us, and let your music grow old with us.

Got a lot of styles bubbling up at the moment from all over. I've been skeptical about the South American vibe before, but a couple groups changed that recently. Check **Todosantos** from Caracas, Venezuela, all glitched-up, high-energy dance beats that sound like they took a page out of the **Eats Tapes** book (who themselves have a new LP out on Tigerbeat6), and then pop-and-locked some *baile* funk in there for good measure. Their *Acid Girlzzz* EP will be out soon on Mexico's Poni Republic. Visit www.myspace.com/1234567collective for fun videos and a remix by **8bit**. Also in that vein, a name to watch from Argentina is **Frikstailers**—like Todosantos crossed with a healthy dose of Girl Talk. Best glitch I've heard in ages. Look out for them and a lot of the other new-to-me names on another Mexican label, Pino Rec. Check www.myspace.com/frikstailers and www.pinoec.org for more.

I've also gotta shout out a mix by **Tittsworth** and **DJ Ayres** that's been around for minute but that you can still pick up through Turntable Lab. *Ayres 'n' Titties*, released on Money Studies, is 63 tracks of original productions from your hosts and more Baltimore royalty. The 30-second B-more remix of Chris Rock is worth the price alone, and if you're curious about club music, let this be your bible. It's got stand-out productions on from **DJ Taj**, pusher of the Bamabounce sound and creator of the Wu-Tang slide, and a clutch of other Southern-inflected B-more tunes. Tons more at Bamabounce.com.

XL88R favorite **Graeme Sinden**'s been hard at work, landing both a weekly show on London's Kiss FM and a bi-monthly residency at Fabric with **Dave "Switch" Taylor**. They've got remixes and tracks galore to look out for, including two EPs from their label Counterfeet (including hot jams and collaborations with **Count of Monte Cristal** [a.k.a. **Herve**]), a remix of **Basement Jaxx**'s "Hey You" coming on XL, a remix of **Walter Meego**'s "Through a Keyhole" on Minds of Fire, and the highly anticipated redo of Switch's "A Bit Patchy" (at drum & bass speed) on Data. Sinden's also got a four track EP coming on the Dubsided label, and if that weren't enough, it sounds like Switch is rounding out most of the production on the second **M.I.A.** album. He produced the awesome "Love Guide" on *Arular*, so you know the new one's gonna be crunchy, full of bass, and 110% goodness.



After Silence By Martin De Leon THE OUTER ORBITS OF ELECTRONIC MUSIC



Shakespeare probably never listened to IDM, but he would have loved the names. This month, the DJs, producers, and bands listed all have bizarre monikers—layered meanings mirroring the textured sounds of their compositions. Or, at least, they're fun as hell to say.

London songstress **Glass Candy**'s 12" single "I Always Say Yes" (Troubleman Unlimited) incites glacial booty shaking with its sinister marriage of an Ed Banger-esque aesthetic with a Throbbing Gristle beat. The slow, druggy disco track is driven by Candy's husky voice, which is more stuck in the late '70s than the future.

Vocoders, on the other hand, are still about the promise of the future. Jersey City's excellent Italians Do It Better label should know, with the first release from the brilliant trio **Mirage**. Their self-titled debut EP features simple, minimal vocoders-meets-808 thumps—enough to make you put on a gray spacesuit in any event. "My Music" is just a dirty 808 rubbing up against Simone Adonai's voice as she repeats the title ad nauseum. I expect great things from this tiny Jersey label.

Poor people can't afford the future but that's why **Hopewell** is here. The New York five-piece is like a b-grade version of The Arcade Fire, with catchy pop and heart-wrenching melodies. *The Notbirds* (Teepee) is a solid EP and the title track's post-punk guitar work proves it.

Producer **Khan**'s aesthetic knows no geography, as he's lived in Berlin, Finland, and Mexico. "Strip down to your big toe," Khan advises on the unpredictable single to his terrific album *Who Never Rests* (Tomlab) which demonstrates that tight, glitchy beats with owl samples and witty lyrics are still needed in IDM. Owl samples, I said.

Poney Poney probably eats owls. Like a Parisian Suicide, the trio uses ticky-tacky beats, silly new-wave haircuts, and **Justice** to

produce great songs. Their dumb-hot "Junior 12" (Arcade Mode) is a good example, with its post-punk/pre-techno rhythm and scratchy guitars. You will need to jerk those hips: The new Franz Ferdinand is here, but they're French.

Record labels are too broke today to worry about hips. Fortunately, there are still good ones out there, like Merok Records. They've got **Crystal Castles**, a Toronto-based duo that produces trashy, intelligent electro—T.I.E., anyone?—on their self-titled EP. The British label has also released the work of U.K. press darlings **Klaxons**. Sleeping is not encouraged: In fact, Merok won't allow it.

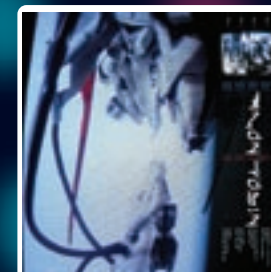
!!! returns with more exclamation-point beats on their 12" single "Heart of Hearts" (Warp), where they go for synthetic bliss. Like old-school Chicago house made in a ratty apartment in Brooklyn, the thick, juicy textures are a welcome change. Drums hiccup at the end of the song, folding in on themselves and displaying that bands can be producers, using studios as beat machines.

Wonder where all the good British post-IDM has gone? England's **Operator** is here for you. Like early Autotech thrown against Spank Rock, his *Exemption Song* EP (Scandinavia) is filled with hard, brainy beats to make your neck bend.

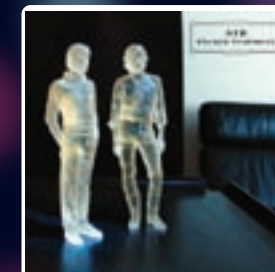
Team Doyobi knows their way around videogames. Christopher Gladwin and Alex Peverett make gritty, 32-bit beats on "Metabeast," off of their new album, *The Kphanapic Fragments* (Skam), which is full of difficult darkness. So what's in a name? A promise that experimental electronic music is alive and kickin'.

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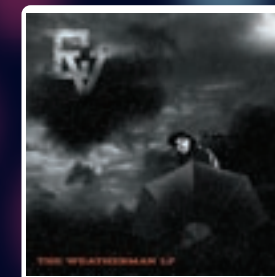
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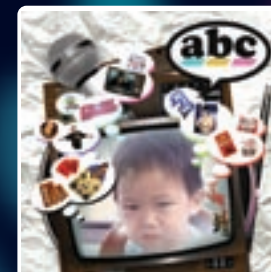
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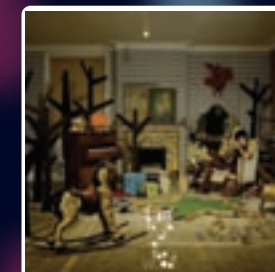
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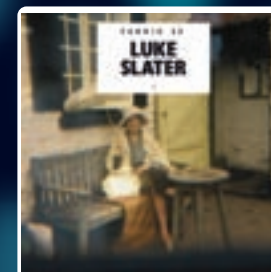
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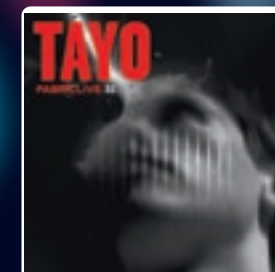
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Reggae Rewind By Ross Hogg

THE HEARSAY AND DOWNLOAD ON
DANCEHALL, DUB, ROOTS, AND LOVERS ROCK



Mavado



Busy Signal

Throughout most of the world, weapons production sharply increases during wartime. Things are no different in the world of dancehall, and people, there's a war goin' on.

After **Vybz Kartel** was ousted from **Bounty Killer's** Alliance for siding with the enemy (**Beenie Man**), it was only a matter of time before someone else got pulled into the lyrical battle. Enter **Mavado**. On "Mr. Informer," over the aptly named Drumline riddim from **Black Chiney**, which also features hot cuts from **Busy Signal**, **Assassin**, and **Ward 21**, Mavado sings, "New name fi informer/Mr. Palmer" (Kartel's real name is Adijah Palmer). On the same riddim, Kartel hits back with a tune called "Mafrado" that is rife with personal accusations. The two also go at it on the Power Cut riddim (Big Ship), a hard new track produced by **Stephen McGregor**, son of reggae great **Freddie McGregor**. Busy Signal murders the title cut, while his rival **Idonia** scores big with the onomatopoeic "Bush-Kash." Power Cut also boasts a potential crossover hit in the form of a conscious cut from **Sean Paul** ("Where Is the Love").

But **Vybz** is not alone in his anti-Mavado campaign. His newfound ally **Beenie Man** launches his own Mavado attack over the massive re-lick of **Steely and Clevie's** Taxi riddim, mocking Mavado's "gangsta fi life" slogan on "Foundation Badman." **Elephant Man** and **Mr. Vegas** each score with big tunes on Taxi, but no one can touch **Buju Banton** and his biggest song in years, "Driver A," in which he details the ins and outs of running various strains of ganja. But just when you think that all dancehall artists are hawkish when it comes to battles, here comes **Capleton** on the Taxi with "Why Did It Have to Be Like This?" in which he decries how "artist a fight artist" and calls out Mavado and Vybz (among others) by name.

The producers behind two of Sean Paul's biggest hits have new riddims out right now: **Jah Snow Cone** and **Steven "Lenky" Marsden**. Jah Snow Cone (best/worst name ever?) created the Applause riddim for Paul's "Temperature" and is back with the similarly vibed Cheerful riddim, a joyful uptempo track with hot tunes from **Beenie Man** with **Ms. Thing**, **Mr. Vegas**, and **Spragga Benz**. Lenky was the man behind the immortal Diwali riddim over which Paul voiced "Get Busy," and he keeps the dancefloors packed with his new Synthetic riddim, filled with crowd-pleasers from **Zumjay**, **Voice Mail**, **Red Rat**, **Elephant Man**, and **Fire Links**.

But new kids are dropping big tunes, too. **Erup** is currently enjoying multiple forwards with his "Se Dem a Gangsta" on the Gangsta Sittin' riddim, which also features a serious contribution from **Idonia**. And **Mr. Peppa** continues to do his thing with "Baby Love" on the Z-March riddim, which serves as the backdrop for Mavado's "Don't Cry" (let's hope that one doesn't prove to be prophetic).

Richie Spice has a new album entitled *In the Streets to Africa* (VP) that includes some of his biggest singles from the past two years, namely "Open the Door," "Youth Dem Cold," and "Brown Skin."

Finally, **Stephen Marley** steps out of brother Damien's shadow (sort of) and delivers what may be the biggest crossover hit since "Welcome to Jamrock." On "Traffic Jam," Stephen and Damien team up with **Buju Banton** over a sped-up version of the classic Answer riddim—complete with a beatbox—for one of most infectious songs in years. Get used to it—this one will be around for a while.



Breaking
Kayfabe

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Reggae Guest Reviews: Massive B Soundsystem

Since the mid-'80s, Bobby Konders has been a respected figure on the New York scene. Whether producing, promoting, remixing, or heading up the Massive B label and soundsystem (with partner Jabba), Konders bridges all sorts of musical gaps. On top of his and Jabba's weekly slot on Hot 97 FM in New York (the highly rated On Da Reggae Tip on Sundays at 10 p.m. EST), you can check his favorite grooves on any number of mix discs, the most recent of which is *Massive B Presents Vol. 03: Big Tunes*, featuring hotness from **Collie Buddz**, **Richie Spice**, **Matterhorn**, and many more. So what else is he feeling these days? *Derek Grey*
www.massiveb.com

I-SASHA "DON'T U KNOW" white/TRI/7

Tune is wicked. I-Sasha comes from Trinidad, the land of soca and calypso. In Trinidad, they love reggae, and especially rub-a-dub or culture sounds. There is a large Rasta following there, and over the last couple of years they have been puttin' out their own Trinidad reggae—and it's wicked! This particular tune has I-Sasha singin' over the riddim. The tune is catchy with its punchline, but what makes it is the steel-pan drums—very original. This tune will continue to get bigger and with a proper push will have the hip-hop DJs playing it! Big tune!
Bobby Konders

MAVADO "LONG GUN" white/JAM/7

This is the hottest artist in Jamaican dancehall. His unique sound, singing or deejaying, has streets locked! He is a soldier for the Alliance Crew with **Bounty Killer**, the five-star general responsible for carrying Mavado to the studio. This tune is very catchy, with an electronic voice repeating and Mavado deejaying in a laid-back style. If you are selectin' inna dance and playing for the hardcore *tuggist* crowd, you draw this tune right after the culture segment to start the vibez. Mavado is the real McCoy and "Long Gun" *jus bust*. Take the safety off when you squeeze it—legal shot!
Bobby Konders

SHAGGY "CHURCH HEATHEN" Big Yard/JAM/7

Well, what can you say about Shaggy... He has style, money, hit records—a lot of hit records—and still loves the dancehall. He has done it again with this tune, with its haunting choir in the background, crazy riddim track, and Shaggy poking fun at a lot of hypocrites that go to church. This is a fun record, and if you see the video, you'll definitely laugh; **Ninjaman** is the pastor! The tune is bad, bad, bad, and will definitely have you dancing. Big up his original producers like **Sting International**, **Robert Livingston**, and the **Big Yard Crew**—I don't know about MTV, but this will definitely be big in da street!
Bobby Konders

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Broken Business

By Peter Nicholson

FUTURE JAZZ AND BUSTED BEATS



Kahun



Myrna Brazza



Quantic

What the f!@# did we do before the internet? Yeah, the infotainment superhighway may have cursed us with a million crap bands on MySpace, but there are most definitely some quality tunes to be found in cyberspace. Case in point: the tracks proffered by **Simon Harrison**, the Leeds-based selector who can be found at www.basic-soul.co.uk, as well as on www.samurai.fm, where he's been programming the Nu-World Mix since 2004. Both feature everything from drum & bass to classic soul, but Harrison also has a keen ear for beats that are broken in all the right places. Here's what he's digging these days:

Mr. President Feat. Mr. Day "Love and Happiness" (Favorite Recordings)
The French duo (a.k.a. Bruno "Patchworks" and Mr. Day) returns with a beautiful cover of the Al Green classic.

Amp Fiddler "Faith (Jazzanova Remix)" (Genuine)
People run to the DJ booth when this is dropped. The combination of Jazzanova and Amp Fiddler was never going to fail.

Jonny Miller "Starz" (Jus'Listen)
Released last year but still gets a spin wherever I play. Watch those bassbins wobble... Brilliant!

What else do I love about the internet? I love me some digital promos, so I don't even have to put pants on for that long walk to the mailbox. Fresh from my inbox is a sultry lil' uptempo shuffler from the Bagpak Records crew, "Bontelabo" by **Kahuun feat. Myrna Brazza**. Also loving "Slyngel" on the flip, with its raunchy sax and woody bass. Another gem lurking in my Gmail folder is the latest from the Bugz team of **Afronaught** and **Daz-I-Kue**. The "Want'Choo Longa Edit" of **Slope** feat. **Ovasoul7** (Sonar Kollektiv) starts out with bare vocals and acoustic guitar but watch for the bass—this one's a big, big tune!

Not absolutely everything hits my speakers via the web—some tracks are probably just too damn long for even broadband. Like **Phil Asher's** epic 12:45 Restless Soul Boogie Mix of "Spirit of Love" from **Root Soul** feat. **Vanessa Freeman** and **Mike Patto**—hell, even the name takes a minute. This is an absolute corker of 4/4 funk with rich piano, super-hot disco drums, and jazzy horns. Since I'm straying into the disco/house side of things I also have to mention the superb *Mr. Feelings* EPs from **Robert Strauss** (Earth). Really feeling the party chatter and percolating drums of "Miami Jammin'" and the smooth pads and subtle bassline on "Music is My Life" with top-notch vocals from Richie Hennessey—if you dig Georg Levin (or, for that matter, Billy Ocean) you'll dig this.

Gonna close things out with a pair of releases from the good folks over at Tru Thoughts. **Quantic's** "Sabor" has red-hot percussion from Puerto Rico's **Tempo** (who has worked with Roberto Roena of Fania All Stars fame) while "Electric Folklore" is down 'n' dirty bruk business. But single of the month goes to another Tru Thoughts' slab o' wax, this one from New Zealand's **Janu**. The double-a side has none other than Aloe Blacc lending his tenor to "Mother Earth," but the a, "Disinformation," has it all: chopped hi-hats, fat bass, sing-a-long vocals, and a huge trumpet break. Run, don't walk to your local vinyl pusher-man and get your fix!



En Tu Casa

By Nick Chacona

HOUSEKEEPING, FROM TECH AND MINIMAL TO DEEP AND TRADITIONAL



Karizma



Dennis Ferrer (Photo by Chris Davidson)

All through that bitter Northeastern winter, the weekly New York event that kept the dancers hot as a summer night was Soulgasm, a serious destination for anyone looking to dance to deep house with an energetic, classic NY vibe. Presided over by DJ **Brian Cox** and host/dancer **Ejoe**, Soulgasm serves a very mixed and musically focused crowd. It was quite exciting to find young people getting down to straight-up house in a town where hip-hop has monopolized the ears of the 18-24 demographic. For more info and lineups on the Wednesday night event at Sin Sin, check out www.myspace.com/soulgasmnyc.

Now on to some tunes. West End Records, now run by **Blaze's Kevin Hedge**, has been firing out deep bombs for the past few years. Their latest signing, **Autosoul** featuring **Ijeoma**, takes a very electronic approach to the traditional West End sound with their single "Believe." With upbeat strings and soulful R&B vocals, this tune is reminiscent of the late-'90s U.K. garage sound. Remix duties were given to **Rhythm Slaves** (a.k.a. **Richard Gow**), who adds a tribal groove to the drum section and some strangely un-menacing synth-bass growls, while **Kid Massive** goes straight for the peak-time, U.K. funky-house vibe by jacking the tempo, pumping up the percussion, and working the space effects dramatically.

Another West End alum, **Ian Friday**, will soon see the release of "Theorem Del Faya" on his own Tea Party imprint. The Tea Party mix features a soulful male vocal, strings, and flutes, with contrasting synthetic and organic elements and a stand-up bassline riding atop a synth bass. The original mix is a straight-up Latin house affair, which swaps in guitars and percussion.

Also dropped in March on U.K. label R2 was the debut album by **Karizma**, *A Mind*

Its Own. Karizma is historically known as one of the **Basement Boys**, but has truly been making a mark over the past few years on his own. On *A Mind*, Karizma explores a range of sounds, from broken beat soul to deep tech to traditional melodic house, showcasing his understanding for the threads that bind today's soulful electronic music.

One of Karizma's recent collaborators, and a regular of this column, **Dennis Ferrer** will once again turn the house world on its head with the release of his re-rub of Telepopmusik's "Love Can Damage Your Health" (Objektivty). This is a deep and sultry vocal tune that will have fans of Everything But The Girl reeling.

Speaking of EBTG, **Tracey Thorn** just dropped her new Astralwerks/Virgin album *Out of the Woods*. But it's all about the lead single, "It's All True," which features an all-star remix cast consisting of **Martin Buttrich**, **Darshan Jesrani**, **Sasse**, **Ewan Pearson**, **Chris Menace**, and Brooklyn disco darlings **Escort**.

Anticipation is building for **Luciano's** "No Model, No Tool," the first release in the Cadenza Split Composition series. Taking a fresh approach to the traditional DJ tools record, Luciano's tracks are skeletal rhythms, supplemented by ambient scapes, drones, and vocals that serve as both remix elements and additives to the DJ set.

To round things out, an upcoming release that really straddles all of this subgenre business: Chicago's **Mazi** joins forces with **Cass & Mangan** as **Bad Mouth** for "Anymore" (Fresh Meat). This will be a crossover tune for all types of house DJs, from prog to deep and beyond. Mixes from **Luke Solomon** and **Phonique** won't hurt the buzz either.

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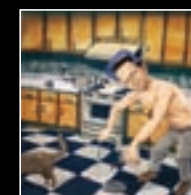
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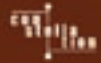
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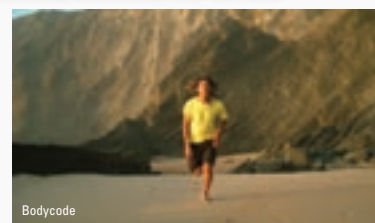


|| REVIEWS || COLUMNS



Bubble Metropolis
 By **ML Tronik**

TECHNO: MINIMAL, BANGING, AND BEYOND



San Francisco seems poised for a techno revival of sorts. If you're to believe what some of the local scenesters have been saying of late, recent visits by the likes of Matthew Dear, Carl Craig, Dan Bell, and others signal that a new wave of techno-mania is afoot. The main difference between this wave and the last seems to be danceability. For example: the new single from **Namito**, "Joujou" (Kling Klang). It absolutely pumps with a cracking minimal drum scheme and driving bassline. My favorite cut is actually the b-side jammy, "Zizou."

In a similar vein, check out the dance-friendly techno vibes of my man **Tobias** and his absolutely impeccable *Dial* EP (Logistic). Treacherously deep, house-y techno beats here, as if Senor **Villalobos** and **Kerri Chandler** holed up in a hotel room with two laptops and a bag of pills. Or maybe just two pills and a bag of laptops. Either way, you know it blazes.

With an original version that clocks in at just 119 bpm, **Jacopo Carerras'** "Olanto" (Lan Music) is a nine-minute-plus excursion into the world of tech-funk—a world where funky loops rise and fall alongside ever-shifting rhythm patterns—and the remix is as good as the original. Fantastic stuff.

It would be difficult for me to take a sincere look at some of the more danceable techno tracks around at the moment without mentioning **Matthew Dear's** *Audion* project. His latest under that *nom de drum machine*, "I Gave You Away," from the three-track compilation *Death Is Nothing to Fear Vol. 1* (Spectral Sound), is nearly 12 minutes of mid-tempo trippiness. More hotness on the comp comes in the form of **Par Grindvik's** "Casio" and **Bodycode's** "Exciting Ride."

Recently, **Courtney Tidwell** took an exciting ride from the streets of Nashville to Berlin, where she met **Ewan Pearson** who remixed her latest release, "Don't Let the Stars Keep Us Tangled Up" (Ever). Pearson does an excellent job of remixing the original indie-folk version into what could be considered an instant classic. It's great music to wake up to, but it's also funky enough to keep you floating across the floor.

The Rapture has launched its own label, Throne of Blood, and one of their first releases will feature remixes of their own cut, "W.A.Y.U.H." Bringing some serious funk to this platter are West Coast techno daddy **Claude VonStroke** and London's **Simian Mobile Disco**. Both tracks are certified knockers.

Back on the minimal front, **Ryan Crosson's** "Gotham Road" b/w "Hopscotch" (Trapez) remix 12" has that subtle funk flair for the booty-shakers out there. With mixes from **Magda** and **Bruno Pronsato**, you can't really go wrong.

Maybe not "funky techno," but definitely a peak-time thriller, is **Amox & Atle's** "A Witch's Kiss" on Tic Tac Toe's *Noughts and Crosses Remixed* EP. Keep an eye out for this cavernously deep 10-minute workout.

Also getting the remix treatment is the **John Dahlbeck's** "Now It's Not Summer" (Systematic). Go straight to the **Stephen Bodzin** take for a maddening funk attack; exactly what we all have come to expect from Bodzin, really.

Lastly, **Joel Mull** is back, and he's come a long way from the days of banged-out, loopy, Swedish techno. Be on the hunt for his newest, "Begun the End Has" (Railyard)—very, very heavy, synth-driven techno music. If you squint hard enough, you might be able to hear all the wonderful details of this epic tune.



Techno Guest Reviews: JDH & Dave P

On JDH & Dave P's mash-up mix for Defend Music's *Go Commando* series, the ex-hardcore-punk-cum-techno-party stalwarts lead the world into the ever-expanding New York underground. The duo doesn't let a silent second pass with their speedball of neo-electro hits from post-punk songster Joakim, space crusader Rekid, and Swedish siblings The Knife. The duo has gathered a cult-like hipster following with their Fixed party at Brooklyn's Studio B and Dave P's Making Time party in Philly, both featuring celebrated DJs like Ewan Pearson, Justice, and Soulwax. But tonight we're digging through their crates to see what's keeping NYC up all night. *Fred Miketa*

PROXY "DESTROY" Turbo/CAN/12

This is a new single on the always consistent Turbo. This time around, Tiga gives us a new Russian artist, Proxy. The super-heavy "Destroy" has a bassline that reminds us of Digitalism: really dirty and raw. Also featured on here is the more upbeat "Destroy" remix from Aussie up-and-comers Riot In Belgium, and b-side "Din Dah." *JDH*

ELEKTROCHEMIE "MUCKY STAR" Get Physical/GER/12

Elektrochemie's "You're My Kind" was one of our favorite tracks from 2006. We usually play it right when we are about to take the party to the next level. "Mucky Star" has that same feel to it. The instrumental in particular is really driving and just builds and builds. *JDH*

LCD SOUNDSYSTEM "GET INNOCUOUS" DFA-Capitol/US/12

The new LCD Soundsystem record is most definitely the best record of 2007! "Get Innocuous" is a slow builder. The track starts off minimal, with James Murphy's Bowie-esque vocals, and gradually adds layers upon layers, becoming a massive dancefloor anthem. Nancy Whang's vocal, "You can't normalize/Don't it make you feel alive," is one of the best vocal hooks of any dance rack this year. This will be one of the biggest tracks of the spring and summer! *Dave P*

SIMIAN MOBILE DISCO "IT'S THE BEAT" Wichita/UK/12

Simian Mobile Disco put out some pretty amazing tracks in 2006 but this release is, without a doubt, their best work yet! With a synth part that is very reminiscent of Technotronic's "Pump Up the Jam," along with their usual thick analog production, this track has all the necessary components of being a cocaine sex jam (a.k.a. a banger!). *Dave P*

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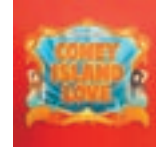
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REVIEWS || COLUMNS



Read the Label By Jesse "Drosco" Serwer

HIP-HOP MIXTAPES, WHITE LABELS, AND SHIT



Andre 3000



A-Trak (Photo by Tim Barber)

Andre 3000 is rapping again, and, after *Idlewild*, that's definitely a good thing. Spicing up what might otherwise be pedestrian remixes of **Unk's** "Walk It Out" and **Rich Boy's** "Throw Some D's," Mr. Benjamin turns the dueling Southern club smashes into some real food for thought. "Throw Some D's (Remix)" (white label) might be the best official remix in a minute, with **The Game**, **Jim Jones**, **Murphy Lee**, and **Lil Jon** all keying in to Dre's energy and turning a good but repetitive song into rewind central. On "Walk It Out (Remix)" (also white, also featuring Jim Jones), Andre gives Unk's snap music some intellectual gravity ("Your white tee/Look to me/Like a nightgown"). Hopefully, OutKast's back-to-rap LP, *Ten the Hard Way*, is en route.

Speaking of "Throw Some D's," producer **Polow Da Don** is on fire right now. He's the next Timbaland—you heard it here first. Check **Young Buck's** "Get Buck" (white), with its chunky groove reminiscent of Trick Daddy's "Shut Up," to see what I mean.

I'd always ignored **Dälek**, the NY-area group based around the MC of the same name, until someone slipped me an MP3 of "Paragraphs Relentless" (featuring **Rob Swift** on the turntables) off their new *Abandoned Language* LP (Ipecac). Not sure if it's a single, but this is one of the best produced rap songs I've heard all year—E-I-P wishes he made beats this sinister.

Though "Vans" seemed like a flash in the pan, young 'uns **The Pack** are back with an equally young production combo called **Cataracts** supplying the rumble on "Blueberry Afghani." Originally on a mixtape called *Technohop Vol. 1*, the ganja-fied low-end workout recently turned up as the b-side of **Jimmie Reign** featuring **Clyde Carson's** awful, Camp Lo-jacking "Tryin' to Be Your Girl" (B-Side). Strange, indeed.

Jazzy Jeff's *The Return of the Magnificent* EP is a four-song, vinyl-only preview of his upcoming BBE LP of the same name. "All I Know" (featuring **CL Smooth**) is the winner; Jeff's buttery soul groove matches up perfectly with CL's wistful rhymes. If CL and Pete Rock don't reconcile, these guys should record an album.

The star of former **Digable Planets** funkstress **Ladbybug Mecca's** "Dogg Starr" b/w "Sexual Alchemy" and "If I Need to Move On" 12" (Om Hip Hop) is the smooth a-side production from **Ayatollah** and **Kenny Dope**, who provide a pair of remixes (featuring **Raheem DeVaughn**) of the title track. Ladybug's incense-burning space-soul doesn't work so well on the flipside tracks, however.

Check out **Pacific Division's** *Sealed for Freshness Blendtape*, which jacks the beats of everyman rap classics like "Passin' Me By" and "Bonita Applebaum" for similarly minded sob stories about broken-down Hyundais and women problems.

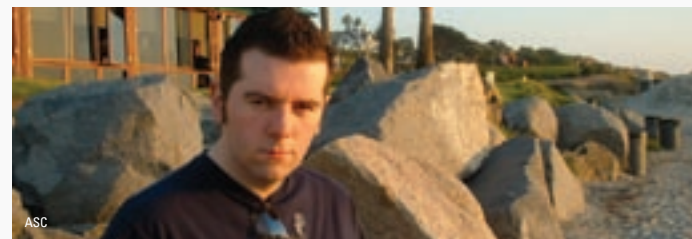
The **Super Chron Flight Brothers** are Billy Woods and Privilege of **The Reavers**, but it's MF Doom's production on the a-side of their "Dirtweed" b/w "Panama Red" 12" (Backwoodz Studioz) that's noteworthy. In the tradition of *Operation: Dooomsday's* "Hey!", Doom flips an absurd sample of *Sesame Street's* Bert doing vocal exercises into audio gold.

He might be going straight Serato these days, but **A-Trak** is still dropping limited-edition white labels. His latest, "Step Off" (Audio Research), features **Little Brother** on the a-side and a B-more club version of his scratch exercise "Knucklehead." With this kind of diversity, his upcoming solo LP looks promising.



Fast Forward By Method One

EXPLORING THE BOUNDARIES OF DRUM & BASS



ASC



Atlantic Connection

In a market that celebrates everything from summery liquid funk to horrorshow darkness, it's become increasingly rare for any one drum & bass project to stand out. But while it may not be on the shopping lists of the machines-gone-berserk crowd, it's hard to argue the significance of *The Eleventh Hour* (Soul:R), the new album from **Mistical**, otherwise known as **Marcus Intalex**, **Calibre**, and **ST Files**. Needless to say, fans of these guys will be quite satisfied.

Moving onward through similar waters, **Atlantic Connection**—one half of North Carolina's **Basic Operations**—is preparing to release the debut single on his new label Westbay Recordings. "What'chu Know," which features the vocals of **MC Deviant**, is a surprising change of pace with its pounding tribal drums, flamenco guitars, and hard-hitting lyrics. It's certainly adventurous, though those looking for a more traditional vibe will be interested in the flipside "Leaving Home," where reversed piano stabs intersect nicely with crisp, rolling beats.

It takes a fair amount of guts to name a tune "X-cellence" (Spearhead), but for lovers of smooth, liquid drum & bass, this new one by **Syncofix** and **Michael Sauer** will likely hit the mark with its chugging funk guitars and string arrangements straight out of a '70s cop flick. "Soullick," the b-side from Canadian man-of-the-moment **Mutt** and partner **Perpetuum**, continues the movie-score string motif but marries it to looping live bass and dubbed-out vocal stabs.

You'd expect the new one from **Lomax**, "Profiler" b/w "Artisan" (Bounce), to follow a similar path, but that you'd be mistaken. Both tracks rely heavily on deep, warping basslines, sci-fi bleeps, and a refreshingly offbeat experimental vibe. Besides, any track that samples the wheelchair-bound professor from *Family Guy* deserves some bonus points.

More bonus points for sampling also go to the *Lost* drop in "Eden" (Vibez), by the resurgent **Future Engineers**, who weave a deep, futuristic Amen track that skillfully treads the line between lush atmospherics and a solid dancefloor sensibility. The same balancing act can be found on **ASC & Mav's** "Too Deep for Ya" b/w "Sceptical" (Covert Operations), as well as the long-anticipated *Covert Operations Subscription Series 5*—a four-record set that includes more tracks from ASC and Mav, alongside the busy **Electrosoul Systems** and newcomer **Nuance**. Mav's "Time & Space" from *Series 5* might just be my favorite song so far in 2007, with a feel that is truly epic and an almost masterful attention to detail.

And lastly, in a complete 180-degree turn from subtlety, it's time to focus on a tune that is sure to be an automatic rewind on many dancefloors—**The Serial Killaz** remix of **Rebel MC's** "Wardance" (Congo Natty). From the half-time hip-hop intro (which samples both **Wu-Tang Clan** and **Terror Squad's** "Lean Back," among others) to the massive, bouncing bassline, to the gunshot-ragga lyrical assault, once the tune kicks in, it's hard not to imagine this one causing serious damage. Yush!



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Lucky 13 By Toph One

TophOne can be heard every Wednesday at the RedWine Social at Dalva in S.F., and check out aidslifecycle.org/5704.



Crazy Girl



Ladybug Mecca



Omni

Maybe I've just been incredibly fortunate over the years with good gigs, but there seems to be an unnerving preponderance of stupidity on the dancefloor these days. I mean, people are just being ignorant and requesting absolute crap, and then acting all huffy when I laugh at them and tell them I'm not a jukebox. It's so funny to me how certain crowds just want to hear exactly what they just heard on their car stereo, or whatever just got nominated for an Entertainment Extra USA Today Golden Grammy Asshole award. I mean, why even enter the club? Just sit in your Acura in your driveway listening to the local pop station. I've always loved the stories I've read about Larry Levan not being afraid to "cleanse the dancefloor" once in a while. That's brilliant. Just wipe the slate clean and start all over again. Trust your DJ. Take the ride.

1. CONCEIT

live/US/rapper

It was a sweaty, beer-soaked night at the Hemlock Tavern and II Squad had just ripped through their set when Conceit took the stage with TopR and Boac in tow—three veteran performers who know each other's styles well enough to finish each other's rhymes. With the room hanging on his every word, Conceit showed why he is one of the most feared and respected cats on the West Coast battle/cipher circuit.

2. WURST EDITS

Wurst/US/12

Impossibly groovy, funky disco edits from Brooklyn, from *XLR8R*'s own Roy Dank. The third 12" should be out by the time you read this. Just go buy it and be happy. You will play it to death.

3. GWIZSKI PRESENTS LOOP REGIONS

self-released/US/CD

More killer shit outta Portland from DJ/producer G-Wiz, who lays out the buttery beats for a slew of guests to work it out over, including Z-Man, Mic Crenshaw, and Eddie K. The tracks are lush-jazz and soul-laced gems, reminiscent of early Hiero, from a young one to watch, fo'sho.

4. TREASURE DON LION HEART

demo/US/CD

This guy is hilarious—about six and a half feet of pure New Yawker, with a thirst for the finer things in life. And on the mic, he controls a room like a champion in his sing-a-long ragga stylee. Big up, Pleasure Don!

5. BUKUE ONE INTROMISSION

Alpha Pup-Funnyman/US/CD

Bukue just gets love, period. The son of Black Panther parents (his Pop was also a back-up singer for Marvin Gaye!), he was a sponsored skater and respected graffiti artist by the mid-'90s. He's managed and toured the globe with Del, Aceyalone, and Ab Rude. And now, on his debut, he drops burners like "Upper Playground," "Beautiful Crime," and "Workitout" featuring another *XLR8R* columnist, Ross Hogg, on the cuts!

6. OMNI "BATTERIE"

NatAural High/US/12

L.A. MC Omni drops the boiling title track off his latest full-length. Enlisting Australia's Obese Records crew for production, this one damn near jumps off the decks.

7. BROWNOUT "LATIN FUNK FOR THE BOOGIE SPOT"

Alternate Take/US/12

Screaming Latin funk to move the crowd, plus the bomb Hydroponic remixes on the flip. Blast that South Texas broken-neck jam loud!

8. CRAZY GIRL ELECTRIC CRAZYLAND

US/internet radio show

The lovely Tiff McGinnis (a.k.a. Crazy Girl) lets it all hang out on her weekly broadcast for brooklynradio.net. Check out her "Meow Mix" of all cat-themed songs! Or the occasional on-air meltdown! Yeehaw!

9. LADYBUG MECCA "DOGG STARR"

Om/US/12

Yep, she's still got that unmistakable flow from the old Digable Planets days, and with Kenny Dope on the remix? Hot as hell.

10. HOPPER & SPINNERTY I FEEL AN URGE

self-released/US/CD

It's funny how cities and scenes go through cycles. Fifteen years ago, San Francisco was knee-deep in rare-groove funk and jazz breaks, and now it's almost off the radar. Thankfully, there are still cats like these two coming up and busting out the dusty, horny jams.

11. CLOCKWERK DUE YESTERDAY

Super Happy Wax/US/CD

The Northwest hits it hard again, with a couple members (Gold and iAme) of Old Dominion and the Sandpeople crews. As tasty as these tracks are, it's actually just to tide fans over until their next full-length, *Some Tomorrow*, due out later in '07, so keep 'em peeled.

12. THE GONG DJ BATTLE

Adiar Cor-Raptivism/US/DVD

Roc Raida put this DJ battle on in NYC last year, complete with an honest-to-God gong to silence poor performances! Some dope sets from DJ Complex and DJ Slyce, and some kooky, funny moments.

LUCKY 13) SPECIOUS SPECIES

US/zine

Cab driver, punk rock DJ, and fellow hill-climbing bike rider Joe Donohoe has crafted a fine and intelligent little 'zine, in the literary vein of V. Vale's *Re/Search* and the shit-stirring attitude of S.F.'s old *Filth*. Kudos and cocktails, my friend!



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IN THE STUDIO: JUSTIN BROADRICK

The cross-genre genius behind Godflesh, Techno Animal, and Jesu talks system crashes and Bomb Squad beats.

WORDS: BRANDON MERS PHOTO: GEORGINA COOK

Since defining grindcore with Napalm Death when he was only 15, Justin Broadrick has made a career out of destroying and rebuilding the rules of heavy music. Best known for his role in the seminal metal band Godflesh, Broadrick's many aliases mask a discography of genre-spanning experimentation. His work with Kevin Martin (a.k.a. The Bug) as Techno Animal predates the half-step pacing of dubstep; solo aliases like Tech Level 2 and Final explore everything from drum & bass to ambient drone.

Broadrick's newest project, Jesu, continues with the singular vision that has always fueled his best work. Heavily layered and massively epic, albums like Jesu's *Conqueror* are rooted in rock, but use few of the traditional tricks of the trade. In fact, Broadrick's technique owes more to drum & bass and electronic music than anything rock music purists would ever try.

WHY DID YOU USE A DRUM MACHINE WITH GODFLESH?

Justin Broadrick: I was in this band Head of David, where I was drumming, so by the time we formed Godflesh, I had a very clear idea of the type of beats I wanted to hear. And the beats I wanted to hear would take four arms, you know what I mean? I was just obsessed with making the sound as massive as possible. And when Godflesh was formed in '88, it was after some of my favorite hip-hop records of all time came out: Eric B. and Rakim's *Paid in Full* and the first two Public Enemy albums. I wanted beats that sounded like that, but I knew a drummer wasn't gonna pull it off.

THE NEW JESU ALBUM SOUNDS MASSIVE. HOW DID YOU DO IT?

All the stuff I learned from producing drum & bass [as Tech Level 2] I've applied to Jesu. Everything was so reprocessed against each other, two of the same kicks, reprocessed back in and out. It's the same concept of layering in drum & bass—filling in a certain dynamic with different breakbeats.

SO YOU'RE RE-SAMPLING A LOT OF MATERIAL?

Oh yeah. I really swear by putting things into other things, into other things, and so on. Running a sound from [Native Instruments] Kontakt out to my Avalon 737 [pre-amp/compressor/EQ unit], and back in again. So many fucking layers of stuff. You know, some of the source material of these sounds are just crap. I've got a project open right now here in Logic, and nothing is the original source.

WHAT DO YOU USUALLY LEAN ON FOR RECORDING?

The Avalon is universal for me. I'll put a kick drum, snare drum, hat, or a bass guitar into that. Any stereo sources I'll generally put into a TL Audio parametric EQ. And I'll drive everything; usually get it in the red. Then that all runs into a Macintosh [G5] and Logic... loads of plug-ins from there. I've been using these valve-emulating compressors lately [from] the URS Compressor suite. They're absolutely brilliant.

CONSIDERING ALL THE PROCESSING YOU DO, HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT PLAYING LIVE AS JESU?

From the most basic drum machines up to a G5, I've had fucking millions of crashes in every group. When Godflesh first came to the States, we had this little Alesis HR-16 drum machine, and we had to use this American power transformer. We came up on stage with this big triumphant announcement, "GODFLESH FROM ENGLAND," just full of metal kids screaming; they didn't know what the fuck was going on. So we literally walked on—kids going mental—pressed play on the drum machine, and it blew up. We had to buy a new one and reprogram all the songs on it! But I haven't had too many problems with Jesu—touch wood. These Mac laptops have just gotten so much more reliable, and I keep telling people... that I feel like I can finally make music without having to reboot the computer every five minutes.

DRUM & BASS HAS INFORMED SO MUCH OF YOUR PRODUCTION STYLE. HAVE YOU KEPT UP WITH SCENES LIKE DUBSTEP?

It's a strange thing for me, that whole movement. When it was garage, I loved it at first: the whole slowed-down drum & bass element of it. But now it's splintered into so many things, and I'm more interested in the dubstep end of it. But like... are you familiar with a guy called Milanese? I just heard him a few weeks ago and I thought, "Fuckin' hell! This is stuff Kevin Martin and I were touching on years ago." I really liked it a lot. It was actually a relief for me to hear something like that in dance music. [Milanese] might not even be aware of our stuff, but it was nice to hear something running in that heritage.

Jesu's *Conqueror* is out now on Hydra Head. www.myspace.com/officialjesu



In Justin Broadrick's studio, from left to right (Native Instruments) Absynth, NI Kontakt 2, Logic Pro 7



ARTIST TIPS: DJ MEHDI

Parisian DJ Mehdi's debut full-length on Ed Banger, *Lucky Boy*, encompasses so many different styles that a single listen can make your head spin. We were interested to know how he changes gears so smoothly and what tools and production philosophies aided one of the year's most promising hip-hop/not-hip-hop records. Here Mehdi breaks down the process, one song at a time. *Ken Taylor*
www.myspace.com/djmehdi

1. "BUSY BEING BORN"

This is a bass-tinged, hip-hop-flavored instrumental. It's made from two things I was doing a lot during the early stages of making this album: playing the acoustic guitar and listening to Bob Dylan. I know it's not super-obvious when you hear the record now, but this one song was definitely made out of those two ingredients. It has me strumming, MPC-rhythm programming, and a Dylan-esque title!

2. "I AM SOMEBODY" (FEATURING CHROMEO)

This is a flashy, '80s-R&B pop tune. It's as simple as me playing around with the MPC1000, sampling two of my favorite records ever, which I can't tell you about, and some cosmic keyboarding on the MiniMoog—the same way I'd make a rap instrumental. We asked Chromeo for a remix and they hit us back with crazy vocals, vocoder lines, and more cosmic keyboards!

3. "SIGNATURE"

For this glitched-out, almost-ambient synth number, I have to give it up to my homeboys: Mr. Kavinsky played this incredible sample to me and said, "Why don't you loop this and have a rapper come in over it?" The day before we mastered the album, I imported it into a Pro Tools session and started messing around, breaking it down into tiny bits and emulating my Justice cousin Xavier de Rosnay's incredible computer-editing ability. I could only do a two-minute interlude. Well, master Thomas Bangalter blessed me with a seven-minute edit!

4. "PONY ROCKING" (FEATURING FEADZ)

One day I was going to Ed Banger's office on my Vespa, and I bumped into DJ Feadz at a stoplight. He was like "You know what? I started rapping! I pitch my voice and it sounds stupid. Come and listen!" I played him this simple MPC instrumental, telling him about my goal to bring back old-school sounds with a modern aesthetic. He came back the very same day with an acapella file, and a good production challenge for me!

5. "LUCKY BOY" (FEATURING FAFI)

This bassy banger was the very first track I did for this record. Hanging around in the South of France with graffiti artist Fafi, playing Spanish chords on my guitar, I came across this simple melody and recorded it on my laptop using GarageBand. Weeks later, I jumped on the MPC and programmed this whole song in five minutes. Fafi wrote those senseless lyrics that we immediately loved and recorded. It sounded a bit strange to us, but for some reason peeps seems to dig it, so we left it at the first take.



1. GARAGEBAND



2. MPC1000



3. PRO TOOLS



4. MINIMOOG



SCOPE IT...

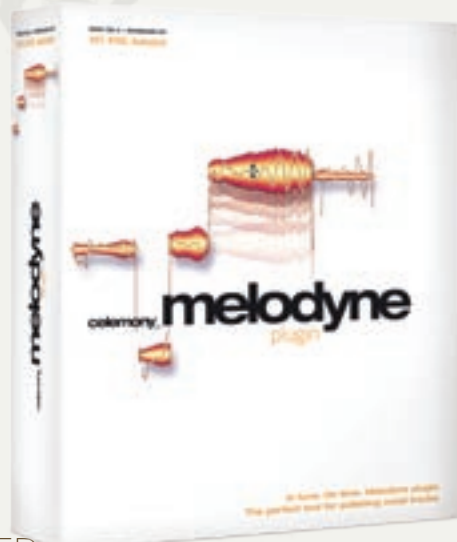
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SUPERPITCHER

Celemony Melodyne Pitch-Correction Plug-in
MSRP: \$299; www.celemony.com

The **Melodyne** plug-in is the most recent version of Celemony's, uh, celebrated pitch-correction software, and is the first iteration to offer integrated VST, AU, or RTAS support. Unfortunately, the integration isn't seamless, and while it's nice to not have to use stand-alone software, some of the quirks can be a bit tiresome. Once a workflow develops, however, the results are nothing short of spectacular. Melodyne is—plain and simple—a magical piece of software. With it, even a tone-deaf vocal track can be rendered usable, and a decent take can be spectacular. Pitch-corrected notes sound completely natural, and pitch-shifted notes do, too—up to an octave and beyond. Despite its interface quirks, Melodyne has quickly become an essential part of my recording process. *Roger Thomasson*



SOUND OF SILVER

Sennheiser HD 280 Silver Headphones
MSRP: \$219.95; www.sennheiser.com

Sennheiser doesn't joke around when it comes to headphones. Unlike the horde of other specialty cones this German company offers (from monitoring to basic listening to wireless), the **HD 280** DJ/production cans get the job done without emptying your pockets. Featuring 32dB outside-noise reduction, these babies will shut you DJs off from the rest of the world (or at least a full club of drunken partiers) when you need to be. In addition, the circumaural (closed-back) ear pads are extremely comfortable and collapsible for the cluttered, on-the-go road warrior. These dynamic headphones also come equipped with a heavy-duty coiled cord for maximum durability, adapters, and easy-to-replace parts—important for rage-prone performers and studio luses looking for professional quality with utilitarian design. *Fred Miketa*

WHEN IT'S CLOSED, IT HARDLY EVEN RESEMBLES A PHONE...



SWEET SERENITY

Bang & Olufsen Serene Cell Phone
MSRP: \$1200; www.bang-olufsen.com

Built by Samsung and conceived by the high-end audiophiles at Bang & Olufsen, the super-sleek **Serene** tri-band GSM flip phone is practically a work of art—and when it's closed, it hardly even resembles a phone. The keypad is styled after a rotary dial, with an iPod-like click wheel to control the info screen, which sits at the bottom near the mouthpiece so that your ear doesn't smudge it. All the standard features (email, SMS, camera, web-browsing) are included, but there's no music-playing function. Other issues? One, you need a B&O proprietary screwdriver to access your battery and SIM card, so if you lose that, you're kinda screwed; two, the cam's lens is on the side of the phone so, yes, you have to take pics sideways; and three, \$1200 is pretty hefty. But naturally, if it's coming from B&O, you know the sound quality is crystal clear. *Will Tobin*



TOWER OF POWER

Mustek Paragon TW450 iPod Tower Speaker
MSRP: \$249.99; www.mustek.com

Does the iPod need another attachment-type gadget? Probably not, but it can always use a sleeker integration into the home stereo system. Eighth-inch adapter cords, USB-powered transmitters, and all that stuff eventually becomes a tangled mess, and sometimes doesn't even sound that good when all is said and done. Mustek's **TW450** iPod tower speaker provides clean sound and makes for a nice addition to the living room furniture. It can house any iteration of the iPod (USB or FireWire) in its dedicated dock (which comes in black or white), and pumps out a decent 45 watts through its high-end tweeters and a 5.25-inch sub, while charging the iPod at the same time. Of course, if your iPod's at the shop, the speakers also have aux inputs for any other audio devices. All in all, a towering achievement for the price. *Derek Grey*

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PROBABLY THE BEST THING GOING AT THE MOMENT.

IN THE RED

RedSound Systems SoundBite Micro Auto-Loop Module
MSRP: \$199; www.redsound.com

In the continuing quest to give live electronic music performance more fire, the **SoundBite Micro** allows for something unprecedented: the ability to bpm-sync your turntables and your MIDI gear (read: your laptop running Ableton Live). There's also a loop sampler mode and several high-quality filter effects (as seen in previous models in the Red Sound range), but the sync is really the main sell—setup is simple, and in no time you'll be layering your own beats on top of your wax. The buttons can be a bit tight, but the MIDI-syncing is hands-free and consistent. For those who want to combine the human element of DJing with the human element of live loop construction, this is probably the best thing going at the moment. *Evan Shamoon*



GOING UNDERGROUND

Submersible Music DrumCore 2.0 Drum Software
MSRP: \$250 (add-on drummer packs, \$79.99); www.submersiblemusic.com

If the black arts of beat construction are somewhat beyond your grasp, Submersible Music believes it has the answer. In addition to an included 8GB of content (as well as individually sold sets from specific drummers), **DrumCore 2.0** also functions as a drum-loop librarian, allowing you to organize all of the loops on your hard drive by drummer, style, and tempo (in this sense, similar to the library functionality of Native Instruments' similarly named KORE). DrumCore also allows for easy manipulation of said beats: With a simple click, you're able to add subtle variations to a selected loop. Importing loops can be a bitch and the interface is straight Big Bird (in a bad way), but if you're in need of a funk injection, you could do far worse. *Evan Shamoon*



MO' FIRE

M-Audio NRV10 Analog Mixer/FireWire Audio Interface
MSRP: \$899.95; www.m-audio.com

Finally, M-Audio has given us the FireWire freedom we've been waiting for with the **NRV10**. The new prince of production and live performance is an 8x12 analog mixer and a 10x10 digital audio interface complete with a series of effects, analog EQ, and mic preamps (not to mention monitor and effect sends). In addition to the all-in-one convenience of the NRV10, this FireWire-enabled unit allows for some serious CPU-free mixing, monitoring, and effects layering—a godsend to performers with latency issues and dwindling processor strength. But the best aspect of the NRV10 lies in the convenience of multi-tracking live instruments, vocals, and MIDI controls into the same mix. In other words, this machine allows bedroom beatmasters to seamlessly move between recording, mixing, and editing without having to change connections or deal with the stress of overwhelming the old laptop—or the brain. *Fred Miketa*

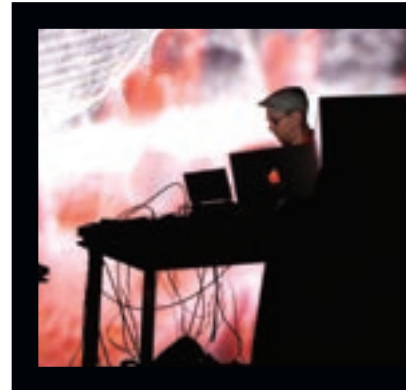
WELCOME TO ECHO COUNTRY.



THE BRIGHT SIDE OF DARK SIDE

Universal Audio Roland RE-201 Space Echo Plug-In
MSRP: \$249; www.uaudio.com

While some analog diehards sit on eBay and sift through vintage music shops looking for Roland's legendary Space Echo system, those who don't fear the digital revolution can bask in the glory (and price) of Universal Audio's **RE-201** plug-in. Although it's not the heavy tape machine lugged around by dub producers and the almighty Pink Floyd, the software version of Roland's masterpiece cuts pretty damn close. Compact, with all of the controls of the original (from Spring Reverb to the precise Repeat Rate function to the muting "Dub" switch), the RE-201 is a plug-in that will refute any old-schooler's stubborn opinions. And for those going the extra mile, UA's version comes equipped with exclusive digital features like Tempo Sync, Echo and Reverb Pan, and Tape Select—a utility that allows producers to choose new, used, or old tape quality. Welcome to echo country. *Fred Miketa*



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VIS-ED: FRIENDS WITH YOU

FROM PLUSH TO PLAYGROUNDS,
MIAMI'S MAGNANIMOUS DUO
DESIGNS WITH MAGIC IN MIND.
WORDS VIVIAN HOST
IMAGES FRIENDS WITH YOU



With so many brands trying to insinuate themselves into your daily life, it's easy to be suspicious of an organization that wants to befriend you. But it's hard to stay cynical about Friends With You, an outfit so upfront about their intent that they've made their mission statement their name.

In actuality, Friends With You's Sam Borkson, 27, and Arturo "Tury" Sandoval (son of the Cuban jazz trumpeter of the same name), 30, consider themselves merely the earthly vessels by which a panoply of otherworldly characters—Malfis, the Good Wood Gang, and Red Flyer—get their message of magic and wonder across to the world. The Miami-based twosome started their outreach in 2002, hand-making limited numbers of plush characters and selling them via designer toy emporiums like Kid Robot and StrangeCo. Unlike "too cool for you" vinyl toys, each FWY avatar came with a story: Shoebaca, a pile of

brown fur with removable kidneys, was designed to help you make decisions; King Albino, a giant fuzzy square with a gaping maw, promised to "erase all of life's embarrassing moments."

It may sound crazy to you, but FWY's ageless philosophy has taken off like wildfire. Erasing the line between childhood and adulthood with a rainbow-dipped paintbrush, they've created a playground at a mall and an interactive dream installation for the Miami MOCA, as well as hotel rooms, a stop-motion short film for Nike, a blimp parade, and a forthcoming line of children's books. Is there anything they can't do? No, and you can do anything too—just take heed of their inspirational words below.

www.friendswithyou.com

ABOVE
Super Malfi Graphic, 2006

RIGHT
Friends With You exclusive
for XLR8R Vis-Ed, 2007





ABOVE
FWY Plush Release 2006
Back row: *The Malfis*
Middle row: *The Boy*
Front row: *The Burger Bunch*

When did you realize that you could do what you wanted as “work?”
Sam: We don’t call it work. And we’ve been always doing it.
Tury: It is a full-time job to do what you want. People take it for granted that other people are there to dictate what they need to do. Once you have full control of your actions then you are also in full control of your failures. Can’t blame anyone else, and that in turns makes you be even more responsible and on point.

Where do you get your best ideas?
Sam: I get tons of them from dreams, from seeing a spirit in the street or just looking at something ordinary differently. I love to study religions old and new to see how they advanced civilization through messages, and try to adapt that to the very open club we are creating.
Tury: The best ideas are the ones you always had—it’s how you interpret this and how you implement those ideas in the real world. That is where function and form meet to create magic or a disaster! The best (or my favorite) ideas are the ones that

take a long time to form. Quick ideas are like cheap thrills: sweet and great, but they make you feel like you are not really in control.

What keeps you in Miami instead of moving to NYC or L.A.?
Sam: I love, love, love Miami. It’s a great portal to the entire universe and the rest of Earth. Miami has a great spirit and a ton of mashed-up culture, which is very inspiring. We also have access to one of the greatest power centers in the world, which is our beautiful beaches, great weather, great times, and lots of BBQs. The energy here is very thick and you can either have amazing adventures or hide away in meditation and hard work and study.
Tury: Miami is where the magic is! Don’t you know? Yeah, you knew. That’s why you asked.

What character are you closest to?
Sam: We are both Malfi by nature, I feel some kind of silly spirit that is a trickster and is all powerful.
Tury: Characters come and go! They are just like friends: you



fall in and out of love, and you find each other again some time after... I’m most fond of the characters that we are working and developing right now, including some of the old ones that keep reincarnating into new forms and shapes. That permanent transformation is what makes a character powerful!

Your work suggests that humans need magical talismans.
Sam: They don’t need them, but they do need spirituality—all humans do. It’s why coming together to pray is so important. It gives you magical and superhuman powers when we focus our brains together towards a certain goal or resolution. Our magical talismans are basically a good way of presenting people with a focus tool to help them empower themselves.
Tury: Talismans or amulets are of great importance because they serve as a constant

reminder to their owner that he or she believes in that outer option. Without that in place it’s so easy to fall prey to the modern (false) sense of control. You will always find a lot more spirituality in communities or countries that are poor or in a chaotic social state. These people have little control, [so] believing is an essential need for survival. We (first-world citizens) don’t need that any more, and that makes us a little cold. It’s humbling to know that you are not in control. Once you know this then it is freeing to know that control is something that you can live without. We tell people that they are not in control and they freak out, because they have nothing else to fall back on!

What is your favorite magical talisman or creature, like Pegasus or a rabbit foot?
Sam: I love all of them and they are all



TOP ROW
Prince Malfi poster, 2006

ABOVE (FROM TOP)
Plush toys, 2000-2007: *Squid and Mini Squid*, *Red Flayer and Mini Red Flayer*, *Mini Poppings with Mom*, *Barby with Baby*, *Mr. TTT and Mini TTTS*

Wooden toys, 2005: *Black Foot and Lucky DooVoo* (from the *Good Wood Gang*)



relevant to what we are doing.
Tury: Outside of the ones that we design ourselves, I would have to say Eleggua. [An orixa of the Santeria faith, who is a trickster god. – Ed.]

What are some big influences on your design?
Sam: Mother Nature, TV, Miyazki, Tezuka, Jodorowsky, religion, the future, the universe, microcosms, branding, *kawaii* culture, the internet and new information systems, music, life and adventure, and lots of science.

What comes first when you create a plush toy, the story behind it or the actual figure itself?
Sam: Mostly it is a simple shape or feeling we have and we are depicting it through the simplest means necessary. Then so much emotion and life begins to attach to it as we distort and construct and deconstruct the idea. We draw them hundreds of times together and it's really fun!

How much of an influence is Japanese culture on Friends With You?
Sam: Huge. The Japanese culture is absolutely genius. They keep themselves young through their ancient diet of sea plants and fermentation devices, they have a vast knowledge that the world is hungry for, and their version of consumerism is really brilliant. We study hard to convey emotions through simple brands and characters—it is an intelligence we love to learn and combine with our life and experience, and the rest of the world's, and then rebroadcast the signal from the other side of the world.

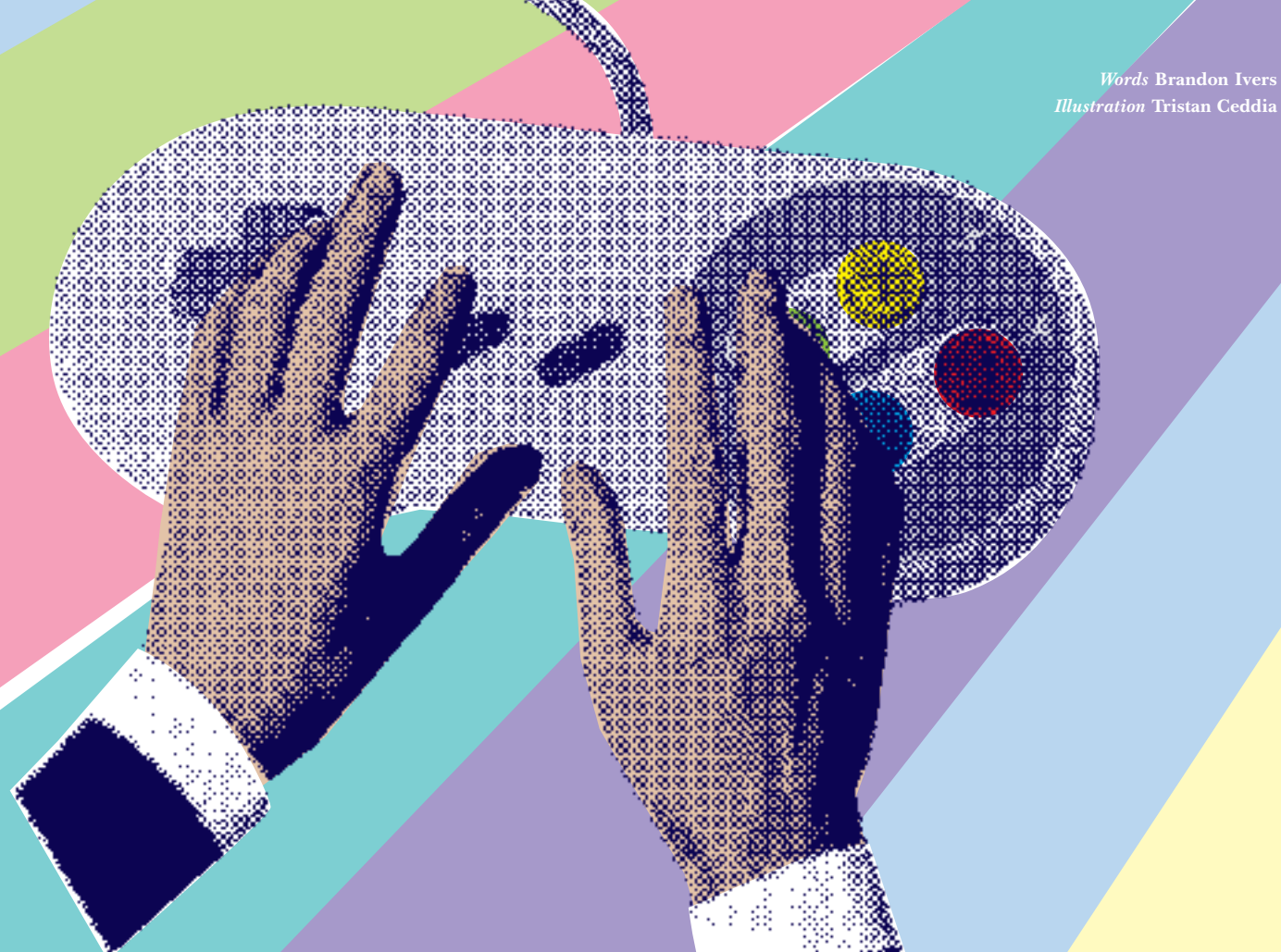
What is the best advice you ever received?
Sam: "Be truthful in your pursuits" is a great one.
Tury: It's hard to say. But this friend of my dad once gave me *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran and a Jimi Hendrix tape. Those rate pretty high on my list.

TOP LEFT:
 Still from the *Natural Communication* video (commissioned by MTV), 2006

ABOVE:
Rainbow Valley playground at Aventura Mall, Miami, 2006

EAR LEFT:
Skywalkers beach parade at Art Basel, Miami, December 2006 (original plans and photo of the actual event)

Words Brandon Ivers
Illustration Tristan Ceddia



THEY'VE GOT GAME

ARE VIDEOGAME COMPANIES THE NEW INDIE LABEL?

Seven years ago, when *NSync's "Bye Bye Bye" ruled pop radio, if someone had predicted that I'd someday like a song by Justin Timberlake called "Sexy Back," I would've been insulted. Yet, all these years later, I do like "Sexy Back," which is either totally embarrassing or proves the following: Good music doesn't always come from where you'd expect.

Like Timberlake, videogame soundtracks have also been snubbed as a source-of quality music. However, the score is changing, literally: Videogame companies are putting almost as much effort into the soundtracks as the games themselves, while musicians are realizing that there's more at stake here than an easy paycheck—people are actually listening.

My game-music epiphany came while playing Harmonix's console hit *Guitar Hero 2*. After shredding through Heart's "Crazy on You" for two straight hours, I decided to unlock some hidden songs. Scrolling through the options, I landed on a sludgy chunk of Electric Wizard-inspired doom metal by a band called Megasus. Their featured song, "Red Lottery," was a brilliantly desperate, gloomy dirge—the sort of thing you'd *never* expect to find in a videogame.

"Usually, you don't hear something that heavy in games," admits Ryan Lesser, guitarist of Megasus, and (coincidentally) Art Director at Harmonix. "The response has been amazing. [Megasus] could put together a tour based off that one song. We've all been in bands that have done things the hard way, but with *Guitar Hero*, we've suddenly got fans in Norway and Australia."

Videogame soundtracks have translated into a decent supplementary income for some established bands and producers, and have also proven successful at resurrecting musical careers, with *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* making Chuck D a threat again and Flock of Seagulls getting a second run thanks to *Grand Theft Auto*. But the relative success of an underground act like Megasus hints at the potential of videogames to be a very important method of distribution for indie bands' music.

"I don't think a lot of people realize it's possible to have a small studio of hip people just making their art... and their art happens to be a videogame," says Lesser. "Two years ago, we were like, 'You know who would be perfect for *Guitar Hero*? The Bags.' They were one of our favorite

Boston bands from like 20 years ago. So we said, 'Fuck it, this is our platform! Let's put the music that we love on it.'"

Unfortunately, not all gaming companies are like Harmonix; most of the industry is still rooted in a "take the money and run" approach. "You may get a couple grand—if that—to have your song in a game, but to my knowledge, not many acts get royalties," says Ryan Rayhill, editor of the *XLR8R*-affiliated *Phuze* magazine, and a former employee of Rockstar Games. "Having music in a game could get you a little more exposure, but it doesn't have much impact on your career in most cases."

Don't tell that to the salivating wolves I saw at the Winter 2007 NAMM Show, the U.S.'s most well known conference for music-gear manufacturers and starving guitar heroes of yore. After attending a panel discussion on game-music licensing, I felt like I stepped out of a pyramid scheme seminar. You could practically see the gold in the attendees' eyes, riled up on the notion that they could make easy cash by selling material to big companies like EA.

Though videogames may not yet be small bands' instant ticket to fame and fortune, the industry *is* changing, and small production houses are the future. Now that videogames appeal to a wide range of customers, companies like Harmonix are able to cater to niche markets. While that doesn't mean the entire industry is going to pull a Justin Timberlake, it does afford new levels of creative freedom.

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